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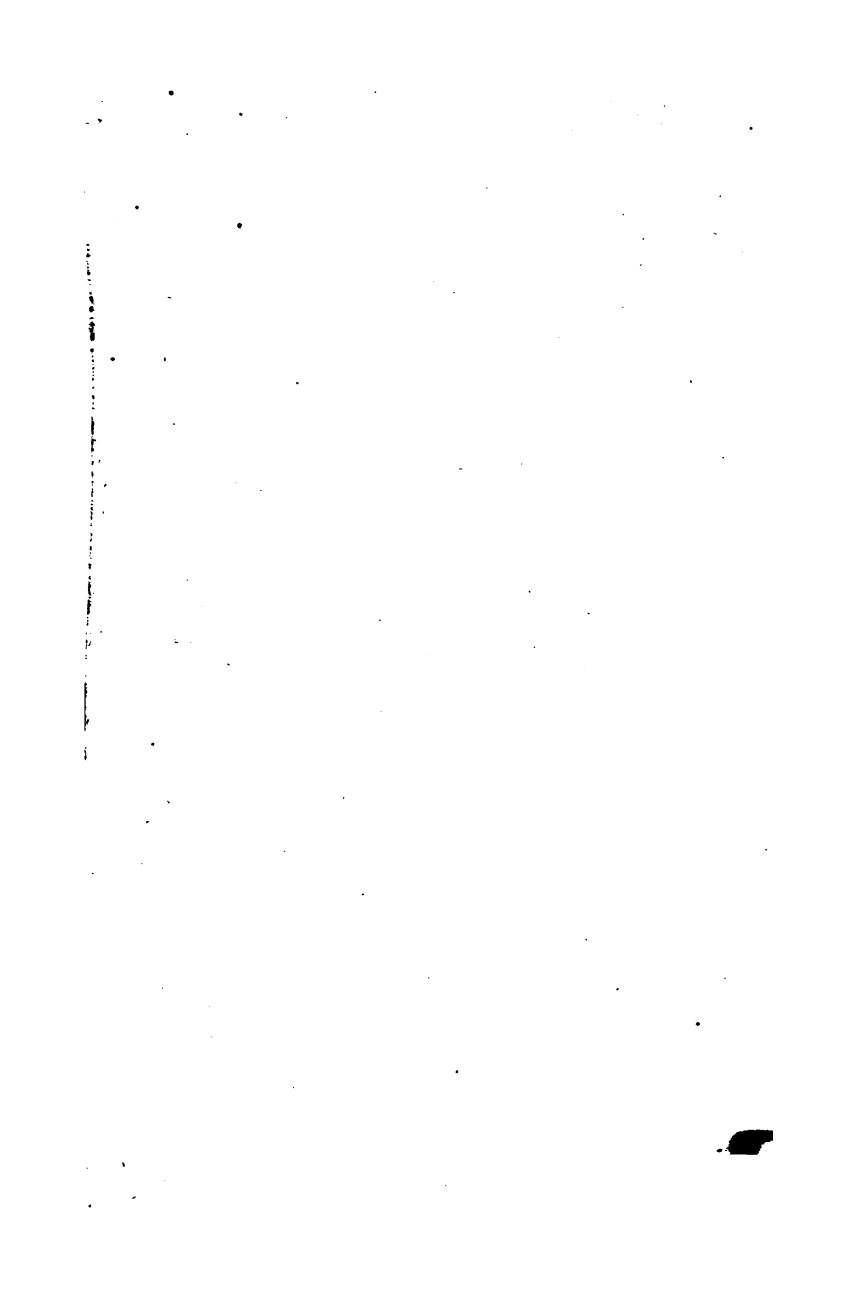
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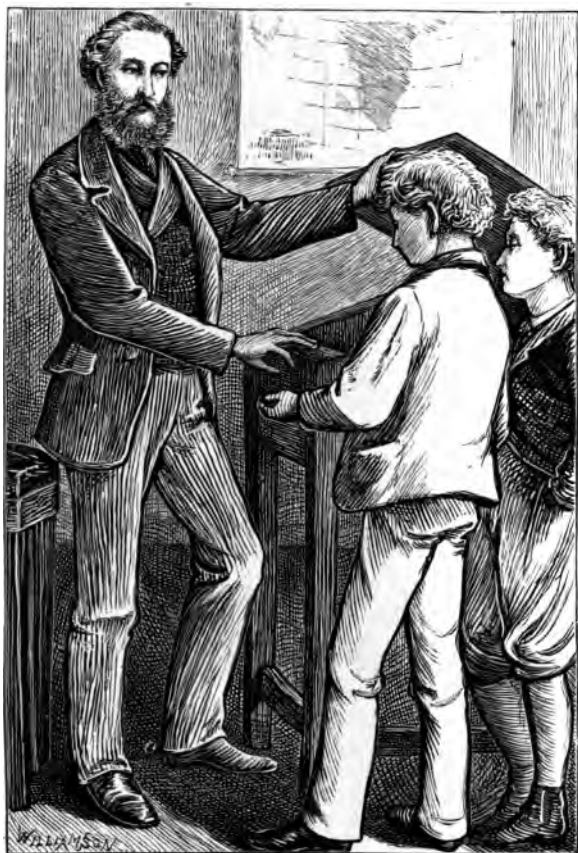
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FRED GRAHAM'S RESOLVE



1489 - f. 176a.





'We have long had it in our minds to offer you a little testimonial, for we have never had a kinder master.'—FRED GRAHAM'S RESOLVE, page 10.

(Frontispiece.)

FRED GRAHAM'S RESOLVE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
'MAT AND SOFIE,' ETC. ETC.



EDINBURGH:
WILLIAM P. NIMMO.

1872.

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FRED GRAHAM'S RESOLVE.

CHAPTER I.

FRED LEAVES SCHOOL.

WHEN I first knew Fred Graham, he was a bright-complexioned, blue-eyed, flaxen-haired young Saxon of sixteen, finishing his education in an excellent school a few miles out of London. He was the frankest, merriest-hearted boy going ; as good as he was bold, as kind as he was courageous, and, what is rarer still, as studious as he was clever and talented. He was a youth of whom any father in the three kingdoms might have been justly proud ; and our master, Dr. War-

rington, who had been his instructor for two or three years, thought most hopefully, and even ambitiously, of the future before him.

He was the son of wealthy parents, and in due course might expect to become a wealthy man himself; but I never knew a lad who prided himself less on his social position and his great expectations. I never knew one more ready to help those who, towards the end of the week, 'ran short;' or one who was so quick to forget a kindness he had himself shown, while he so faithfully remembered the slightest kindness done to himself. Need it be said that he was a general favourite?

One of the first things in his character which left an indelible impression on my mind, and which knit my soul to his in ties as dear as those which bound David and Jonathan together, was his unostentatious, delicate kindness to Mr. Fairhurst, our writing master. There is seldom a school, whatever its reputation for respectability, in which some



of the masters are not poor. Fairhurst was very poor, because he was very benevolent to a number of needy relatives, whose daily bread depended on his exertions. A thoughtful, wasted face he had, and hair prematurely grey. He was dressed in a faded suit of black, which was always brushed scrupulously clean. When he leaned over us to give instruction as to the better holding of the pen, or the formation of a letter, we could hear his breath coming and going fast as the ticking of our school clock. Every one liked, every one felt sorry for him, but it was Fred who first put it into our hearts to help him.

‘I tell you what it is, old fellows,’ he said one Saturday, when we were richer than on any other day of the week, ‘I think Mr. Fairhurst would be all the better for a little of our spare cash. I have been looking at his face very often this morning, and it has seemed to say but one thing.’

‘What’s that?’ we all cried together.

‘Where is to-morrow’s dinner to come from?’ answered Fred, with a tremor in his voice.

‘You don’t say so!’ said our quiet little Markham, instinctively putting his hand in his pocket.

‘I think,’ continued Fred, ‘we can’t do better than give him all we have. Now, the best of mothers in this world has, this morning, tipped me half a sovereign, and all of you have got money to-day; let us put it together, and give it him; you know it was our firm intention to present him with a testimonial of some kind at the end of the term.’

‘That’s all very well,’ said Markham slowly, like a miniature Dr. Johnson; ‘but your poor fellows are generally proud, and how do you know that he would not be offended? Remember the case of the great Dictionary-maker, who, with a passionate burst of tears, pitched the shoes out of the window which, in the purest kindness, were placed at his door when he was nearly barefoot.’

‘There is a right way and a wrong way in which to do everything,’ maintained Fred; ‘and before he goes home to-day, I should like Mr. Fairhurst to be convinced of our friendship, respect, and sympathy. Now, come; here’s the hat, and in goes my half-sov. first; the smallest contributions thankfully received, and no greater thanks given for the largest. Be quick, or he will be gone!’

In a very few minutes more than three pounds were collected. ‘That’s the quickest and easiest part of the business,’ said Markham. ‘Now, who is to give it him?’

‘Fred!’ was the general response.

‘Very well, then,’ returned Fred, with a somewhat paler face than usual; ‘but, Markham, you must and shall come with me:’ and before any remonstrance could be offered, he took him into firm custody, and we watched them hurrying away to the school-room on their benevolent mission. The writing master was locking up his desk with a sigh, and a

look which told of griefs far beyond the reach of minds like ours.

‘What is it?’ he said gently to the two boys. ‘You look agitated; there has nothing gone wrong, I hope?’

‘Mr. Fairhurst,’ rejoined Fred, with a trembling lip, ‘we have long had it in our own minds to offer you a little testimonial of our esteem and respect, for we have never had a kinder master. We really do not know what to buy; perhaps the money’— And the boy who was noisiest in play, and the quickest in every game, broke down utterly, and could find no more words. Markham hung his head like a criminal, as Fred told us afterwards, and expected every moment to be ordered out of the school-room. The pale face of the writing master immediately crimsoned, not with anger, however, but gratitude. ‘Don’t refuse our gift, sir,’ continued Fred, with the utmost respect, as he pressed it into his hand; ‘we all wish it was ten times more valuable.’

‘It is very kind of you, young gentlemen,’ said Mr. Fairhurst, with a tremble and a sob in his tone; ‘you hardly know what you have done; but God knows, and I am sure He will never forget it.’

No other words passed, and the two boys were glad to get into the grounds again, where, as they gave an account of their interview, a Sabbath stillness prevailed.

The next vivid remembrance I have of Fred is connected with a day which occasioned great pain to all of us—the day of his leaving school under very mournful circumstances. His father had long been ill, but it was his earnest and affectionate wish that his son should be spared the sorrow of witnessing his sufferings, and finish his last term at school. In the middle of the term, however, he received one morning one of those missives which every school-boy dreads to open—a letter with ‘immediate’ on it. He opened it. It was from his mother, who begged him to come home

with all speed, for his father was seriously ill. He looked at the letter in a kind of stupor ; there was no post-mark on it, and he wondered who could have brought it. He bowed his head on his locker, and gave way to a passionate burst of weeping.

It is no exaggeration to say that every one shared in Fred's grief. He had been such a noble, good companion ; he had been so forgetful of himself and so mindful of others ; so brave, candid, and true, that he had won all hearts ; and as, with face buried in his hands, he held his head down, and seemed unable to move, there were none who would not have been glad to bear a portion of his burden. Dr. Warrington, with his hands closely clasped behind his back, stood, with compassionate face, looking down upon the grief-stricken, almost broken-hearted boy, like a strong, sympathizing angel.

Presently the door opened, and there glided into the room a fair young face well known to all of us : it belonged to Maggie, Fred's sister,

of whom we were all chivalrously proud. She stood for a moment at the door, as if afraid to enter; then, without an atom of self-consciousness, although many eyes were fixed upon her, she went up to her brother and threw her arms around his neck. She was two years younger than he, but in this time of trouble hers was the courage, his the weakness. Thirty years have glided away since that delicate vision of girlish beauty flashed like a sunbeam into our prosaic school-room, but the vision is as bright in my remembrance as if I had only seen it yesterday.

‘Fred, Fred,’ she cried in thrilling tones, ‘speak to Maggie. Quick, dear, or you may be too late; think of dear papa!’ The words had the effect of arousing him from his lethargy, and he staggered rather than walked into the dining-room. Maggie was a heroine with all of us from the first day we had seen her; every one would have felt himself honoured to have been her knight in the most trying emergency;

and to see her now overwhelmed with grief was more than the stoutest-hearted among us could bear. Some of the elder boys, as they dashed away a tear, passionately demanded what others were crying for. If the lessons were very imperfectly said that afternoon, it was scarcely to be wondered at; and when the sound of carriage wheels was heard at the door, simultaneously we started to our feet. Our good master made no objection, and a host of us were gathered round the carriage door sooner than it takes to tell.

‘Good-bye, Fred!’ echoed from many voices; ‘don’t forget us, old boy, and come back as soon as you can.’ A wave of Maggie’s little hand was the only response. A dozen of us rushed forward at once to kiss it, but the vehicle dashed rapidly away, carrying with it the cheeriest, heartiest, best boy our school had ever known, to meet the heaviest sorrow that ever darkened a young life. Another trouble, too, was looming in the distance, of which, as he drove away, he had not the faintest foreboding.

Thus it was that Fred Graham left school. He never returned, and a blank was left in our hearts which it was impossible to fill up. In every school there is a good boy and a bad boy, exerting either a good or bad influence. Fred's influence had always been to encourage what was truthful, honest, and of good report, and to discourage by word and act the slightest approach to what was false and dishonourable. Dr. Warrington said that when he lost him out of his school, he felt that he had lost a power for good that could not easily be replaced. No boy who leaves school with such a character, need, by God's blessing, fear to look the future in the face, however dark and threatening it may appear.







CHAPTER II.

FRED'S FIRST SORROW.

MR. GRAHAM was a City man in a large way of business, and had for years kept up a handsome establishment in the suburbs. Perhaps no man of his class, in the course of a life diligently devoted to business, had worked harder than he, or had been more successful; but, certainly, few men set less value upon money for its own sake. In the midst of the City's turmoil he had been able to lead a calm and thoughtful life. By the wise use of leisure hours, by reading the best books, by intercourse with cultivated minds, above all by a deep-toned

piety, he had surrounded himself by an atmosphere of refinement which your closely driven commercial men seldom breathe. Blessed with a wife who sympathized with his purest and loftiest aims, with two children, Fred and Maggie, who had never given a moment's serious trouble since the hour they were born, Mr. Graham's domestic life flowed peacefully onward.

For a business man, however, he had one fault : he was inclined to believe others to be quite as candid and honest as he was himself ; and, though he was frequently taken in, could never be brought to act with the care and prudence with which men quite as diligent, quite as liberal, and quite as Christian as himself, conducted their business. Edward Yarrow, a distant relative of his wife's, had long been his managing man, and in him he confided most implicitly, and left the business of the house in his hands. This gave him more time for thought and reading, for intercourse with the friends whose society he so highly valued,

and for work in connection with the Christian Church. But it also gave Yarrow, who was a plausible, unprincipled, and most ambitious man, time and opportunity to carry out his own scheme, viz. to become a rich man, and to enjoy what he deemed the pleasures of wealth. He would become rich; and though in carrying out his resolve he might have to crush the benefactor who had introduced him into the house, and to break the heart of his benefactor's wife, he would succeed: this was his fixed and determined resolve. He led the house into a perfect entanglement of schemes and speculations, which resulted only in wealth and influence to himself. He had so falsified and mystified accounts, that when one day Mr. Graham resolved to put his books into the hands of an accountant, he found to his dismay that, instead of being a prosperous, his was a failing house. The report of the accountant was, that if even all his property were realized, and all the debts owing to him were duly honoured, he would

still be unable to meet his liabilities! This sent him home to a sick-bed. To feel that a name which had never been mentioned but with respect and honour, had become a byword in circles in which he had hitherto been received as the very model of integrity, was more than he could bear.

'The Lord forgive you, Yarrow!' he said, as he left the counting-house with a death-stricken face. 'Time will soon be over, and your day of reckoning come round; it will then be seen whether the wicked shall always flourish like the green bay tree. But oh!' he cried in a burst of agony, 'my dear wife and children! How shall I tell them?'

Yarrow heard the appeal with an unmoved countenance, and contented himself with saying, in a cold, hard manner, that had it not been for Mr. Graham's state of health, he should at once have thought it due to his own character to take legal proceedings against him for his unjust suspicions and aspersions.

I have it on Fred's own authority, that Mr. Graham never told his wife of her relative's perfidy ; although he prepared her for a reverse of fortune, he kept the still more bitter disappointment to himself. On the day when Fred had been sent for, his father had been kindly told by his medical adviser that he must prepare for the worst. He replied, with a smile, 'There is no worst for me, my friend. So far as I am personally concerned, everything beyond is better ; what you call the worst will soon for ever be left behind.'

'Are things so bad as I hear they are?' asked the doctor.

'I fear they are even worse than you hear. If I had to live, I should not dread poverty myself ; but I do dread it for the sake of those dear to me. I could have lived on a crust ; but to see our old home broken up will be a terrible blow to my wife and children. God help them !'

'He will ; there is no doubt about it : be

comforted by the promise that He is the father of the fatherless, and the judge of the widow. Had not Fred better be sent for?' asked the doctor affectionately.

'Yes, and at once.'

'I will go for him directly.'

'No,' said Maggie, who had silently entered the room, 'let mamma write a brief letter, and let me take it; please do. If any one else breaks the news to him, it may kill him.' She kissed her father affectionately, and in less than ten minutes was riding with the doctor as fast as two fleet horses could take them.

When Fred entered his father's room, it was to find him unconscious, and resting a throbbing head upon his mother's gentle arm. Her face was tearless, and wore a look of unutterable sadness. At the sight of his father, who a few months before had been a hale and handsome man in the prime of life, lying there helpless and unconscious, perhaps never to open his lips again, the boy gave a smothered sob. What

there was in it to awaken consciousness in the dying man, I cannot tell ; but he suddenly awoke from his lethargy, and spoke clearer and stronger than he had done for hours.

‘Kiss me, my boy,’ he said tenderly ; then gently added, ‘I want to speak to Fred alone. Don’t be afraid, dearest ; the hour has not come yet ; you will be with me then to say farewell, while we are separated for only a little while—only a little while !’

‘Fred, dear boy,’ when they were alone, ‘there has come a heavy trouble upon us : can you bear to hear what it is ?’

‘There can be no heavier trouble, dear father, than losing you,’ was the sobbing response ; ‘any other trouble that could come upon us would be light compared with that.’

‘It is this, my dear : through the treachery of one in whom I placed perfect confidence, our house is ruined. Instead of beginning life with bright prospects before you, you will have to begin, as I did, with no other capital than your

ten fingers, and the blessing of God to attend their efforts.'

'Oh, father, do not think of me! I will work my fingers to the bone for mother and Maggie.'

'I know you will, dear boy. Fred, there is not a stick here that can honestly be called your own; part with everything, and clear our name so far as possible.' Then he told him of Yarrow's treachery, expressing his firm conviction that a great deal of the money which had been lost to the house had got into his possession, and that, after a brief show of straitened circumstances for the sake of appearances, he would show himself in his true colours.

'For your mother's sake, however, keep what I have told you to yourself, at least for some time to come; for it was owing to her wishes that I took him into the business. Don't be afraid, my boy; love God with all your heart, and He who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb will be your shield and hiding-place. Talk with dear old Mr. Cartwright about your

future ; he will give you sound advice. Stand by your mother, my dear. You will never have but one ; never but one !' His voice faltered, but after a pause he whispered, 'Send your mother to me.'

The parting, when at last the final hour came, was indescribably touching between husband and wife, father and children. Unmindful of the bereavement which was so soon to make a dark void in her life, the wife did all that the truest affection could suggest to conceal her own grief, and to brighten the dark hour by the consolations to be derived from a world beyond this. Unmindful, too, of his own sufferings, the husband spoke confidently of a happy reunion in a blessed home, in which sorrow and separation would be unknown. 'A little while,' he murmured several times to himself, as if there was a fund of unspeakable consolation in the words, and shortly afterwards fell asleep. The mother and her two children gazed long and sorrowfully on the face of the dead, which, in its

perfect repose, seemed to tell of the eternal calm upon which the spirit had entered. A final farewell had been taken of the troubles of life. There would be no more going to the city ; there would be no longer the distractions and cares of business ; anxiety and disappointment were for ever at an end. 'So He giveth His beloved sleep,' said the widow, whose tears came at last, and Fred and Maggie wept with her.





CHAPTER III.

WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

HAR stranger things transpire every week in the world of real life than ever find their way into works of fiction. The story-teller, by a few strokes of his pen, can suddenly despoil the wealthiest of their riches, and raise the beggar from the dust. He can dispense fortunes to any amount to those whom he deems worthy of them, and make people miserable to the end of their days if they appear to him to have deserved such a doom. We read such incidents, now with delight, and now with grief, and they occasion us a momentary feeling of pleasure or pain, according as the story has appealed to our sympathies.

and interested us in its leading characters. Then we take up a new book, and speedily becoming absorbed in a new set of people, and transported into new scenes, we as speedily forget all that had pained or pleased us in the one we had laid down.

In real life sorrows are not so soon dismissed, and this fact Mrs. Graham and her children had keenly to realize. She was a lady of the utmost refinement of feeling—that true refinement of heart and mind which finds its source in Christian faith and love. In the prime of life, and possessed of every elegance, grace, and virtue which can give light and peace to a good man's home, she had been all that a husband needed to make him happy in the domestic circle, and all that the dearest children could hope to find in a mother. From her they had learned their first prayer, and their first notions of the religious life. She had told them stories, and sung little songs to them in their infancy, which had become part of their being, and as they grew

older, continued to murmur, with a sweet lullaby, through the thick of the sterner realities of life. Fred, even as a merry boy of sixteen, found no sweeter resting-place in which to say his prayers than at his mother's knee ; and when he was more than thirty years of age I saw him choose that spot of all others in which to express his joy or grief to his heavenly Father. Maggie lived in her mother's smile—it was the very sunshine of her life. She had never had any other teaching than that which she had received from her ; the books she read were of her mother's selection ; by her every branch of her studies was wisely directed ; and by her influence, early in life, Maggie had shown the grace and sweetness of a Christian child. Well might the dying father of brother and sister have said, 'You will never have but one mother ; never but one !' It is true of all of us ; Fred and Maggie felt it to be especially true of them.

As matter of course, Edward Yarrow attended his partner's funeral, and he did so with looks

of the utmost concern, and with words of common-place sympathy on his lips. When he entered the darkened house, Maggie and her mother were in the room where the dead was awaiting burial. Long as they might be allowed, they would keep near all that was mortal of him whom they had loved so dearly. Fred, and three or four relatives in a comparatively humble sphere of life, and who owed all they had to his father's generosity, were sitting in silence. The venerable Mr. Cartwright, on whose counsel Fred had been told confidently to rely, was amongst the mourners. He had been his father's first friend when as a young man he started in life, and their friendship had but ripened and deepened as life went on ; there had never been a ruffle or a jar between them. The old man hid his wrinkled face with trembling hands as he said, 'I knew your father, Fred,'—he said this more than once with a sob,—'I knew him when he was not above four or five years older than you, and

he has gone before me—gone before me! I never expected it. He would have come to my funeral, I know; I never thought of coming to his. Fred,' he added in strong tones for an old man, 'be worthy of your father, my boy; he never did a dishonest or mean thing in his life; and though I hear'—

He paused, for Mr. Edward Yarrow entered the room. Fred advanced to meet him with as much composure as he could summon to his aid under the circumstances, but it was no easy task to command his emotion. The partner took the chair offered him, and, sitting down, covered his face with a white handkerchief.

'I was saying, when you came in, sir,' looking at Yarrow earnestly with eyes which still shone brightly under bushy grey eyebrows,—'I was saying, sir, that I never knew Fred's father do a mean or dishonest action; and, notwithstanding recent circumstances, which, I believe, have done much to break his heart, and to send him, comparatively speaking, to an early grave, his

commercial honour and integrity are as untarnished as his piety.'

'I trust,' said Fred, speaking in a low tone, but with a flushed face, 'that no one, in my presence at least, will say otherwise.'

'I shall not, you may be sure, Master Frederick,' replied Yarrow in smooth and sympathetic tones. 'I had only one fault to find with my late partner, Mr. Cartwright.'

'What was that?' said the gentleman sharply who had been thus appealed to.

'That, in love for his fellow-creatures, he forgot his own interests, and did not attend sufficiently to his own business.'

'Say rather,' returned Mr. Cartwright slowly, 'that, in placing implicit confidence in those who were not worthy of it, he was betrayed through the best part of his nature.'

Yarrow's face grew pale, but the conversation dropped; for, slowly down the stairs came the never-to-be-forgotten footsteps of those who remove our dead out of our sight. The next

few moments were those of intense agony to the fatherless boy, and presently, as in a dream, he found himself leaning on the arm of his father's old friend, and entering a mourning coach. Once seated, he threw a rapid glance up to his mother's window. Leaning her elbows on the sill, with her little hands clasped in prayer, and her tear-stained face upturned to heaven, was the sister so dear to him. As the carriage slowly moved off, their eyes met, and the boy felt as if his heart would break. Mr. Cartwright was too wise to make any attempt to restrain his emotion ; he wept with him, and the tears of youth and age flowed freely over the loss of a father and a friend.

The funeral over, the little company of mourners once more assembled in the darkened room.

'As one of the oldest friends of the late Mr. Graham,' said Mr. Cartwright, and addressing himself to Mr. Yarrow, 'I wish to put a single question : What of the future?'

‘It is impossible to say,’ was the steady reply; ‘although I may add, that it is no secret in the city, and can hardly be unknown to you, that the affairs of the house are very much involved.’

‘They were not involved six years ago, Mr. Yarrow, when my old friend confided the management of the concern to you; no man’s name stood higher.’

‘Your age, sir, I accept as an apology for even hinting that the recent break-down of the establishment is to be attributed to me.’

‘I have said nothing, I believe, for which an apology is demanded, or I would be the first to make it; I have simply stated a fact, and I want in the presence of this fatherless boy some explanation of it.’

‘Really, sir, after the mournful ceremony through which we have passed, this excitement’—

‘It is no excitement, and I ask again, What

of the future? Is there anything left for the widow and the fatherless?’

‘I fear nothing; in fact, I believe it will be necessary to sell even this house and the furniture.’

‘My father told me ‘as much,’ said Fred, looking Yarrow in the face; ‘but he thought that, if all his property were realized, there would be sufficient to clear his good name.’

‘That is the difficulty,’ replied Yarrow, ‘the affairs of the house are so entangled.’

‘It shall be the business of my life,’ returned Fred solemnly, ‘to unravel them, and, by God’s help, I devote myself from this hour to the purpose. Amongst the last words my father spoke to me, were those that did not reflect much credit on your character for integrity or honour.’

‘Take care what you say, young gentleman; take care what you are about, or it will go hard with you.’

‘Nothing can be harder to me at present, sir,

than to see you in this room. For a little while, at my dear father's dying request, I will conceal from my mother what I believe of her kinsman's conduct. We are ready to leave this house the moment we receive your notice; and will far sooner trust the God of the fatherless and widow than we would receive a penny from you.'

Mr. Cartwright told me afterwards, that the face of Fred, as he uttered these words, glowed like the face of an angel, and that Yarrow lost his self-possession, and trembled violently. When he had left the house they breathed freely, but not before. Then the old man read, with trembling voice, our Lord's blessed words: 'Let not your heart be troubled. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you;' and kneeling down in the room in which a fond father's prayers had often been heard, commended the mourners to the care of Him whose compassions fail not.



CHAPTER IV.

A TALK WITH MAGGIE.

THE mourners had gone, and Fred was left alone, surrounded by familiar objects, every one of which, in an inarticulate but a very pathetic manner, reminded him of the dear father he had lost. There was the chair, with its rest for the reading-lamp, by the light of which, evening after evening, he would be sure to read what would be as interesting as it was instructive. Not far from it was the stand on which was the well-used Bible, the sacred words of which were a law unto the household, and an authority upon all questions, great and small, from which there was no appeal.

There was the closed harmonium, which would never again respond to his delicate but vigorous touch on the quiet Sunday afternoon, or in the still more quiet evening, when the worship of the sanctuary being over, its hallowed associations were perpetuated by hymns of praise at home. Unchanged on the mantelpiece was the little moveable almanac which every morning he used to bring up to date, saying, as he did so, 'Another new day.' There it was, fixed at the date in which he had been in the room before he went up-stairs to come down no more. No one had had the heart to touch it. Looking fondly at him from the wall was the speaking likeness of his father, as he had been a few months before in health and vigour. Everything in the room was as it had been when his father was alive ; but now on earth he had none. What wonder was it that the brave lad's heart was riven, and that he wept bitterly ? He really did not care so much about the loss of property, except for his mother's and sister's sake. He

was young, and youth is hopeful and ardent, and disposed to dwell lightly upon troubles which in more mature life deaden and crush energy and hope. Had he had his father by his side, to be what he had always been to him, he would cheerfully have gone forth to any toil, however humble or however arduous ; but now, for the moment, he felt like one from beneath whom the very prop on which he had been resting had been suddenly struck asunder.

He was thus sadly musing, when his sister glided in as softly as she had into the school-room when he was bowed down by the mournful intelligence he had received from home. He started from his reverie to find her kneeling at his feet, with her hands clasped on his knee, and her face looking up into his with almost infantile tenderness and faith. The pale face, looking paler still above the black in which she was dressed, lustrous eyes dimmed with long weeping, lips quivering with emotion as she fondly kissed her brother, stirred what was deepest and

most earnest in him ; and ere a word had been interchanged between them, and while he held the trembling little figure to his heart, he resolved to carry out the promise he had made to his dying father, that though he worked his fingers to the bone, Maggie and his mother should never know want.

‘Fred, dear,’ said Maggie at last, ‘we must be more than ever now to mamma what she wants us to be.’

‘Yes, dear Maggie.’

‘In her kindness,’ she went on, ‘she has often called us good children, but I know there have been many times when I have not been good.’

‘I feel just the same, Maggie ; I feel it very keenly to-night I assure you.’

‘But, Fred dear, you know Who it is that will always help us to be good. She has been speaking so tenderly about Him ever since the funeral, and I can almost feel that He is in the house now, so gently and beautifully does she talk about Him. Oh ! Fred, what a joy it would be

if He came to us as He did to the sisters of Lazarus, take us with Him to the churchyard, and give us back papa again !'

'Hush, Maggie!' said Fred with trembling voice, as his tears fell on her face. 'Papa is now with Him who raised Lazarus, and happier than heart can conceive or tongue can utter. Let us try to think of that, and not of the grave in which we left him two or three hours ago.'

'Yes, yes,' responded Maggie, 'I try to think of that, as mamma has been telling me I ought; but,' said the child, weeping, 'I do find it so hard—so hard. Do you think he has forgotten us, Fred?'

'I am sure he has not,' was the emphatic answer. 'Maggie, let us try to be very good, for we have, or may have, some troubles to encounter. How is mamma?'

'She is calmer now than I have seen her for some days. A few weeks ago I noticed her, after a talk with papa, turn suddenly of a stony white. She did not know I was in the room,

and she said, "You can't deceive me, dear ; I know who has done this." That was all I heard ; but for days afterwards I was almost afraid to look at her, she looked so sorrowful. I wanted her to send for you ; but the only reply she would make, and she did make it to herself many, many times, was, "Poor boy, poor boy, he will know it soon enough !" What was there to know, dear Fred ? Don't think me a weak little thing ; tell me, is there any trouble coming on mamma ?'

The question was a most trying one. How tell this fair child, who had been surrounded by every luxury from the hour of her birth, who was so devotedly attached to her home,—how tell her that her way henceforth might be rough, that she would have to quit the home in which she had been brought up, and have to do without the little elegances and refinements which had given such a charm to her young life ?

'Maggie,' said Fred, taking hold of both her

hands, 'do you think you could bear to leave this house?'

'Leave this house!—what, our home?' cried the child in astonishment.

'Yes; even this pleasant home to which you are so fondly attached.'

The little lips trembled, and the pale face became paler, as she said in a frightened whisper, 'I have never dreamt of such a thing. I thought that although papa was not with us, yet, sitting in his room, everything would remind us of him, and that we should often talk about him.'

'So we shall, dearest Maggie, wherever we go.'

'Will you and mamma be with us wherever we go?'

'Yes.'

'Then I do not mind,' said the child boldly.

'That's my brave girl,' said Fred, tenderly caressing her; 'I knew you could be trusted. You must know the reason why mamma has looked so sad and careworn lately has been

that papa had had a reverse of fortune. During his illness things went wrong,'—the words almost stuck in his throat,—'and when he was well enough to go to the city again, he found that he was no longer a rich man.'

'How was that?' asked Maggie.

Evading the question, Fred replied, 'When he came to look into his affairs, he found that he, the very soul of honour, had been led into schemes which, I think, he would sooner have died than enter into, and had been plundered to an alarming extent. He, ill as he was, devoted himself night and day to extricate himself, but it was all in vain. It broke his heart, dear Maggie, and sent him home to die.'

His sister wept no longer; something of her brother's fire and determination flashed into her face as she asked impetuously, 'Who did it?'

The darkened room had grown darker, and although Fred could only see the outline of her fair young face, he read a strength of purpose in it for which he was not quite prepared.

‘Who did it, Fred?’

‘Can you keep a secret?’

‘Yes, if it is not one that may not be told to mamma; you know I tell her everything, and we must now tell her more than ever.’

Fred was troubled. In his heart of hearts he honoured and loved her guileless simplicity; yet the secret he had on his mind was one which, if he kept loyal to his promise to his dying father, was not to be told to mamma.

‘I will keep any secret, Fred, if I may tell it to mamma.’

‘Don’t tell her, Fred,’ said a gentle voice, at the sound of which both children started; ‘it will do her no good to hear it; it is enough that I know it already;’ and in a moment Mrs. Graham had an arm thrown tenderly around the neck of each of her children. They were silent in the darkness for some time, then the mother quietly said, ‘Let the subject never be brought up between us again. I am not poor while I have you with me, my darlings. We

can talk about papa, and think of the bright heaven into which he was taken six days ago, quite as tenderly in a poor cottage as in this fine house. We can love the same blessed Saviour he loved, and by and by we shall all meet in our Father's house to go no more out for ever !'

Oh, thank God for the privilege of Christian faith and hope ! Not knowing what was before her and her precious charge, this Christian mother, from whose sight the husband of her youth had only that day been carried forth, could even in her own grief find some words of comfort for her bereaved children. They sat together a long time without thinking of calling for candles, and then, as they had always been accustomed to do in happier times, knelt down and prayed their evening prayer.



CHAPTER V.

BEGINNING THE WORLD.

THERE had been a sale, and every-thing had been sold off. The old room consecrated by so many precious memories had been turned into an auction mart. The carpet had been taken up, the walls had been stripped of their valuables, and articles which, from old association, were beyond price to those to whom they had originally belonged, were ticketed as 'lot' so and so, and had been sold at a great sacrifice. Of all the things that once belonged to them, only one remained to the widow and her children: this was the portrait of Fred's father; and the circumstances under which it came into his possession deeply

affected him. Mr. Fairhurst, accompanied by two or three of Fred's former schoolfellows, attended the sale and expressed a wish to purchase the portrait, and to present it to him as a mark of their esteem and affection. The auctioneer seeing his advantage, ran it up considerably beyond the price which had been paid for it, and the last bidder found to his dismay that he was about to have knocked down to him what would not fetch a tithe of the money which he had offered for it.

At this moment, Mr. Cartwright, who had purchased several odds and ends,—he was not rich, or he would have bought all the furniture in,—came to the front, and said with emotion : 'Let the boy have his poor father's portrait for nothing ; it is nearly all he will have of what he had a right to expect would one day be his own. Come, gentlemen, be generous ; let the boy have the portrait ; we had all a father once.' The tenderness of the old man's tones was not without its influence even on that money-getting

throng, and after some objection on the part of the auctioneer, the portrait came into Fred's possession, Mr. Fairhurst pledging himself to pay its full market value if called upon to do so.

A few days after the sale, Mrs. Graham and her children were the occupants of three unfurnished rooms in a humble quarter of the metropolis, which, through the influence of Mr. Cartwright, they had obtained at a cheap rate. The good old man would willingly have given them house-room if he could, and if the widow would have accepted it; but he was a bachelor, and had lived in furnished lodgings all his life. His means, as we have said, were not large, but just sufficient to keep him, not in luxury, but in comfort. Having secured what with his moderate wants he considered a competency, he had early retired from business, and was now spending the declining years of life in peace, and anticipating the blessed rest above.

The things which he had purchased at the sale were now neatly arranged in the one sitting-

room of the little family, and gave it a home-like appearance. The portrait occupied the same position on the wall as in their old home; and although the room was barely furnished, Fred felt in his heart of hearts, that wherever his mother and sister were, there was Home, and his resolve grew stronger, as he saw with what sweet patience they adapted themselves to their altered circumstances, to keep a home over their heads, and never allow them to want.

What thoughts were Mrs. Graham's during the first dark days of her widowhood, it is not for me to attempt to tell. One thing is certain, however, that her last thought was about herself, and that she concealed her own grief lest she should add to the sorrow of her children. She was able in the solitude of her chamber to give God thanks that, though her husband had been taken from her, they remained. She prayerfully determined that in whatever way a merciful Providence would enable her to get a weekly income, however small, she would do

her best and utmost for her children. The thought that they should keep her never once entered into her head. She earnestly prayed, now that she was to be father and mother to Fred and Maggie, she might receive such support that they might not irreparably feel a father's loss. The future was a dark unknown to her, but she would meet it with the lamp of faith brightly burning.

As Maggie and Fred looked into her face, they saw in it an expression which they had never seen before. There was a purpose beneath its sadness, a calmness after the storm which had swept over it, which was quite new to them, and which, had they been older, they would have known could have come from Divine strength alone. She was not the less tender for the strength by which she was now inspired; but it gave a sublimity to her features which caused her children to regard her with a feeling of love and awe combined.

‘Now that the house is all in order, dear

mother, and I am sure it looks very pretty,' said Fred one morning, with an attempt at cheerfulness, 'had I not better go and see Mr. Cartwright?'

'What for, my boy? You know how kind he has been already.'

'It was dear papa's wish that I should take his advice as to the best means of getting a living.'

'You are too young for that yet,' said the widow sadly.

'I shall be seventeen next birthday,' said the boy stoutly but tenderly, 'and it will be a sin and a shame if, with the education I have received, I am not able at least to earn a few shillings a week.'

'It is my earnest hope and prayer, my dear boy, that I shall be able to find something to do, and that you may have a little more time to finish your education. Of course, I do not mean at school, but here.'

'Mother, dear, I will not hear of such a

thing. You work for me ! Why, every piece of bread I ate on such terms ought to choke me.'

Maggie rose from her seat and threw her arms round her brother's neck : 'That's my brave Fred,' she said ; 'and you will help me to get something to do, too, will you not ?'

Her brother kissed her, and smilingly answered, '*You* at least are too young to do anything, and must be kept at your lessons for some time to come, and I will pay mamma as handsomely as I can for your schooling, you little puss. I do not mean to say,' continued Fred, seeing how sad his sister looked, and how anxious his mother had become, 'I do not mean to say that we cannot all do something ; but the hard work of the house shall be mine. May I go, mamma ? I will never do anything as long as I live without your sanction.'

'Go then, my dear, and may the God of your father be with you. My heart is too full to say more.'

Fred kissed his mother and sister affectionately, and was soon on his way to Mr. Cartwright's lodgings ; and he found him with an open Bible before him.

'Ah! my boy,' he said, cordially taking him by the hand, and giving him a comfortable seat by the fire, 'I have been hoping to see you every day. I am so glad you have come! I would have called, but I thought I should only be in the way until you were settled.'

'There is no one who would have been more welcome, sir. I for one have been longing to see you, for it was one of my dear father's last wishes that I should come and consult you as to the future.'

'Surely, surely,' replied the old man kindly. 'Well, Fred, what is the future to be?'

'I don't know, sir.'

'Wisely answered, my boy. None of us knows, but God does ; and what a world of comfort there is in that !'

‘I was hoping, sir, to begin just as my father began, and that you would tell me how.’

‘You could not have a better example before you, my boy. Shall I tell you how he began?’

‘Oh, sir, nothing could be more helpful to me.’

Mr. Cartwright looked at the bright and handsome boy before him, and then said, with a sigh, as he thought of the struggle he would have to undergo, ‘Your father began with his foot on the lowest rung of the ladder, and had to work very hard before even he got up two or three steps.’

‘It is just what I should like to do, if only the ladder can be found. I am determined to work, and do not mind how hard if I can but keep my mother and sister from want. This morning she nearly broke my heart by saying she was going to work for me.’

‘Of course, that must not be ; although, if she can obtain a pupil or two to teach with Maggie,

I should not, if I were you, discourage her, for there is nothing like work to keep the heart from pining itself away in unavailing regrets. But I was going to say'—

'Pray go on, sir, and pardon my interruption.'

'Your father began with his foot on the lowest rung of the ladder, and the first ladder was a wrong one. He went into a house of business, and had not been there a week when his employer said, "Can you tell lies?" "I never told a lie in my life, and by God's help I never will." "Then you will not do for me, and you may go at the end of the month," and he did go.'

'Brave, noble, good father!' cried Fred, with tears in his eyes. 'His determination shall be mine, sir.'

'Good, and may God bless you in it. Your father shunned a mean and dishonourable action as he would have shunned death, Fred, not because of what the world would say were he to be found out, but because God would

hate it with infinite hatred. Your father resisted the temptations by which he was surrounded, and by prayer and hiding the Word in his heart, he kept himself unspotted from the world. He was a true Christian, I verily believe, at your age, my boy.' I hope,' added the old man tenderly, 'you are one.'

'I hope so,' said the youth almost in a whisper; 'I know I want to be one, and pray to be one.'

'Although a Christian,' Mr. Cartwright went on, 'your father was no sentimental milksop. He was diligent in business, active, courteous, and obliging, and gradually he made his way; he won the confidence of his employers, and they raised his salary year by year, but he never spent a penny in extravagance. He was always dressed like a gentleman, but at half the cost of his companions in the house. His wants were few and simple; he had always money in his pocket, and was always ready to help those who were broken down, not through mis-

fortune simply, but in consequence of their folly and dissipation.'

'Oh! Mr. Cartwright,' cried Fred, with deep emotion, 'to me at least you have painted a hero. If I could only hope that such a career was before me, how thankful I should be!'

His companion suddenly changed the subject: 'I suppose, though everything has been sold, you have not heard of any of the creditors being the richer for it?'

'I fear that no one will reap any benefit from it but Mr. Yarrow.'

'That, too, was the opinion of a very firm friend of your father's who called on me yesterday; and, by the way, he said that he would be glad to see you any time you called.'

'Is he in business, sir?' asked Fred, with a faltering voice.

'Yes, and in a tolerably large way, and I ventured to say to him'—

Fred burst into tears, and taking the old man's hand, reverently kissed it.

‘Now don’t be cast down, my dear boy, and don’t expect too much; be as calm and resolute just now as your father was when he said he would never, by God’s help, tell a lie in his life. My reading this morning,’ said Mr. Cartwright, glancing at the open Bible, ‘was on a subject which has more or less been on my mind since your father’s death. Your eyes are younger than mine: read me the 73d Psalm.’

Fred read the Psalm with true reverence and feeling.

‘There,’ said Mr. Cartwright, ‘to me is the conclusion of the whole matter. The wicked and deceitful for a time are prosperous; they are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued as other men, while the conscientious and pious go mourning. But verily there is a God who judgeth in the earth, and the ungodly who have reached the very summit of their ambition, find it a slippery place, from which they tumble into ruin. Let us

pray, Fred, for strength, that however hard your life may be, it may be a thoroughly godly one.'

When they rose from their knees, Mr. Cartwright said that if his young friend would call upon him about the same time to-morrow, he would go with him to Mr. Hancorn's.





CHAPTER VI.

IN HARNESS.

MR. CARTWRIGHT had correctly described Mr. Hancorn's business when he said that it was on a large scale. He dealt largely in imports and exports of dry goods, and in the most informal warehouse that ever was seen you saw articles that reminded you of almost every portion of the globe. His business was entirely wholesale, and he kept a staff of about thirty assistants. Few who looked at him in his dingy little counting-house, in which the gas was always burning, and at the chronic state of muddle in which his warehouse always seemed to be, would have thought

that he did much business or had any great aptitude for it. Yet, this prim but seedily dressed little man of forty-five, with German silver trimmed spectacles, iron grey hair, and sharp visage from brow to chin, had one of the coolest heads for business of any man in the City, and attended to his own with such diligence and sagacity that it was in a most thriving and prosperous state. Only one man, he believed, had succeeded in taking him in for years, and he had not written *that* down as certain yet. He had his correspondents in all parts of the world; and many in the City who looked down upon him because he lived in a quiet little house, and would not give his wife and two daughters a carriage and an establishment, would have taken off their hats to him whenever they met him, and besought his silence, had they known how much he knew of their private affairs.

‘Good morning, Mr. Cartwright,’ he said in a shrill voice, when the next morning he and

Fred Graham stood in his counting-house, 'I am glad to see you ; sit down.'

To Fred he said nothing ; and he remained standing cap in hand, while the keen little man of business, lifting his spectacles to his forehead, fixed on him a pair of piercing grey eyes, and looked him through and through. People said that any one who could bear a minute's look of those searching eyes might be reckoned an honest fellow. Fred *did* bear the scrutiny, although the colour slightly rose to his cheek.

'This is Fred, Hancorn, poor Graham's only son,' said Mr. Cartwright, coming to the lad's relief.

'I can see that without my spectacles, Cartwright,' said the other with his shrill treble, a little more shrill than usual. 'Well, what does Fred Graham want ? He can speak, I suppose ?'

This was not a very encouraging invitation, but the boy gaining courage, modestly said that he was in search of a situation, by which he could support a widowed mother and sister.

'You can sit down; what kind of a situation, now, do you want?'

Anything, Fred responded, by means of which he could get an honest living.

'Anything means nothing,' said Mr. Hancorn testily; 'what can you do?'

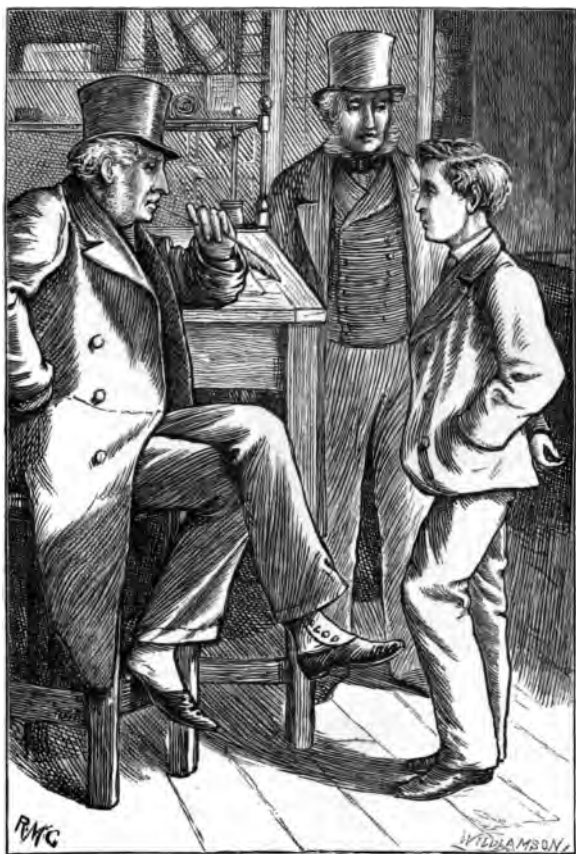
Fred said that he had received a tolerably good education, and hoped he might be fitted for a junior clerk's place.

'Can you read?' said the little man, taking up a *Times* newspaper of that morning: 'read that,' pointing to the first leader; and the youth, with due regard to punctuation and emphasis, read a few sentences very well, and with an evident appreciation of their meaning.

'Humph! the sense was pretty clearly given; what do you think of it?'

'I only wish I could have written with such power, sir.'

'Ambitious, eh? Let me see your handwriting. Sit down here and write a letter from my dictation.' Fred obeyed, and as he wrote



‘What kind of a situation, now, do you want?’—FRED GRAHAM'S RESOLVE, page 64.



a rapid and legible hand, was at 'Your obedient Servant' very soon after the words had left Mr. Hancorn's lips. This fact, together with the clear handwriting, produced a most favourable impression.

'Do you know French?'

He could read it and write it, but he could not speak it.

'The same with German, I suppose?'

The same.

Taking hold of a bundle of letters, Mr. Hancorn selected a French, then a German letter from the pile, and asked him to translate them, which the youth, with a blunder here and there, succeeded in doing.

'What about arithmetic?' and Fred thought his examination would never end; but he showed no sign of irritation, and answered that though not so quick at figures as he hoped to be in course of time, he thought he knew enough for the post he was in quest of. No answer could have pleased Mr. Hancorn

better, and thereupon followed a number of questions in interest and discount and fractions, all which Fred answered rapidly and correctly.

‘Fred Graham,’ said his untiring examiner, putting his spectacles on once more, and looking at a ledger before him, ‘you have been well educated, and you have acted honestly by yourself. Supposing now a situation was found for you, what salary would you expect?’

Fred, as a tear started in his eye, said that it was a question he had never considered. Until a short time ago, he said, looking down on the floor to conceal his emotion, he had never thought that it would be necessary to consider it. He murmured something about his only wanting a few shillings a week—just enough to find bread for his mother and sister, and then fairly broke down.

‘You say nothing about yourself,’ said Mr. Hancorn in a tone more full of sympathy than he had yet employed.

‘Oh! it will not take much to keep me, sir.’

‘I heard the other day,’ said his questioner, looking away from him, ‘that you had made a grand resolve ; that you intended to clear your father’s name, and get to the bottom of the villany which has sent him to his grave, and reduced his widow and children to want. Are you still of the same mind?’

‘I am indeed, sir.’

‘Well, I have never been taken in, as the saying is, but once, and I believe we have both been cheated by the same person. Should you succeed in unravelling the entanglement, you shall never lose by it. Meanwhile, if you will help me in my counting-house here, in my correspondence and anything else that may turn up, I am willing to give you a trial at one pound a week to start with, and I will increase your salary, honestly, according to your work. I do not want any thanks,’ seeing that the youth was about to speak. ‘There is only one word of advice I would give you as a commercial man : be content with small begin-

nings, and do not imagine that the work to which you have set yourself can be accomplished in a week. I leave to my dear old friend Cartwright to impress upon you the importance of seeking other power than that of your own right arm if you are to succeed in the battle of life. When shall I expect you ?

‘To-morrow morning, sir, if you please, or now, if you please.’

‘Good! to-morrow at nine will do;’ and so the interview came to an end.

‘Well, Fred,’ said Mr. Cartwright, when they were once more in the street, ‘you have come through the ordeal well; many older and more experienced than yourself have frequently broken down under it.’

‘I feel, sir, that I owe it to you, and to Mr. Hancorn’s friendship for my father, that I have come through it at all.’

‘There may be a little in that, but very little, for our little eccentric friend is one of those who does not believe in mixing up friend-

ship with business. But now, whatever you do, be patient, diligent, and persevering. You have a right worthy aim before you, and you may safely and confidently ask God to bless you in its accomplishment. Be sure that you seek His help daily and hourly, and you will not fail to succeed. And come in to my lodgings whenever you can spare even ten minutes ; it will be a great comfort to me to see you. Good-bye ! Make haste home to your mother and sister, and tell them the good news.'

It was indeed news which greatly gladdened the hearts of Mrs. Graham and Maggie, although with a mother's fondness, when she came to hear of the character of Mr. Hancorn, the former half dreaded whether he would succeed, and fell back on her own cherished purpose of doing something for herself. If she could get a few music pupils—but she checked the desire ; she had no piano. If she could go out as daily governess—but then who would be with Maggie all day ? They

sat talking far on into the night, and then knelt down in prayer; and the widow besought that He who was too wise to err, and too good to be unkind, would order her and her children's course aright.

Next morning, Fred, bright and hopeful, was in the counting-house. A small table, with pens, ink, and paper, and a bundle of letters, was ready for him a short distance from Mr. Hancorn's high stool.

Without a word of salutation, the merchant immediately said, 'I want you first of all to go through these letters, and make abstracts of their contents. I expect the task will occupy you more than an hour; by that time I shall be ready with other business for you.'

Not another word was spoken, and the young clerk immediately applied himself to his difficult task. It was difficult; there were business terms and abbreviations which he did not understand, and many German and French words so illegibly written that he could only

make a guess at their meaning. With the English correspondence he succeeded better ; for 'making *précis*' was a branch of study on the importance of which Dr. Warrington had laid great stress. In about an hour's time his work was done, as well as he could do it, and he sat waiting with some trepidation for its inspection.

'Let me see what you have done,' cried the shrill voice of his employer, and Fred handed in his papers with a bow. Mr. Hancock glanced rapidly over what he had written, gave a frown here and there, but made no verbal comment.

'Now then, if you are ready,' he said, and straightway began to dictate very rapidly rough drafts of about twenty letters. 'I want you to write these letters in full, but use as few words as possible ; men of business have no time for long letters. I do not want you to hurry, but you must be as quick as you can.'

The clerk again applied himself to his task,

and this time with more comfort to himself. He tried to catch his employer's spirit, and succeeded in writing the letters to his own satisfaction ; and that Mr. Hancorn was pleased was evident from a certain whimsical smile that, all unknown to himself, rippled on his sharp little features:

‘Are you tired?’ he asked, looking down upon him from beneath his spectacles.

‘A little excited, sir, but not tired ; I hope’—

‘Good ! then we will have another batch of correspondence, and by the time you have finished that, it will be dinner time.’ It was half an hour after Fred’s usual dinner time when the work was finished, and he began to feel hungry, but he allowed no sign of weariness to escape him. When Mr. Hancorn had gone through the second batch of letters, he said, ‘There is a respectable coffee-house close by, go and get something to eat. Do you want any money?’

‘No, sir, thank you, I have enough to go on with.’

‘Well, you are to have every day at this time one hour’s rest ; mind that it is rest, and do not allow one thought of business to enter your head while you are eating your dinner.’

Fred smiled pleasantly at the advice, and took his departure. In the afternoon there was a good deal more letter-writing, and some difficult accounts to unravel ; in these he was assisted by Mr. Hancorn, who showed him ways of arriving at results which he had never dreamt of. At five o’clock, to the minute, the merchant said, ‘That will do for to-day ; to-morrow at nine,’ and Fred was allowed to take his departure. To the numerous inquiries put by his mother and sister, he cheerfully answered that it was the first day he had ever run in harness, but that he hoped he should go better and faster every day.

It will be seen that our young clerk’s berth was no bed of roses. Mr. Hancorn seemed to

have a boundless capacity for work in him, and had little sympathy with those who were not equally gifted. If he gave a hint, he expected it instantly to be apprehended, and to be enlarged according to his own idea; if remonstrated with by any of his intimate friends for working his young *employées* too hard, his answer invariably was that he required no one to work harder than he did himself, and that it would make men of them by and by.

Although he did not allow him to see it, Fred's quick apprehension, his unwearied diligence and punctuality, his unfailing courtesy, whatever his employer's mood, greatly pleased him, and at the end of a month he told him that he thought 'he *might* do;' and with this scant encouragement the youth was obliged to be content.

At this time an event occurred which gave unbounded satisfaction to the widow's heart. The three were seated round the fire in their little sitting-room; Fred was reading aloud an

interesting book, when there came a gentle knock at the door. 'Come in,' cried Fred, thinking it was one of the household. To his unbounded astonishment Mr. Hancorn entered, at the sight of whom Maggie fairly ran away screaming. He apologized for his intrusion in less shrill tones than usual, and, having taken the chair which his clerk had placed for him, he said he had casually heard from his old friend Cartwright that Mrs. Graham was an accomplished French scholar and a good pianiste. Now, if that was the case, he should be very much obliged if she would give his little girls three or four hours' instruction a day, on her own terms. As he said this there was not a trace of the office about him, but every mark of a true and simple gentleman. Of course, he went on, the terms ought to be higher than usual, because, if not inconvenient to Mrs. Graham, he should be very glad if she would give her lessons in his own house. 'Cartwright told me that you had a little girl about

the age of mine ; now it would, I know, be a great pleasure to my little ones to see her, so bring her with you always if you like. Consider the thing settled, if you like, on your own terms. Good evening ;' and away the eccentric merchant went, without another word.

'Was there ever anything so strange?' asked Fred, almost out of breath with astonishment.

'Was there ever anything for which we had so much cause to be thankful?' asked his mother in tones of fervent gratitude. 'Truly God is very good to us in thus raising up friends for us ; but in doing so He is only fulfilling His own gracious promise, "Leave thy fatherless children, and let thy widows trust in me."' Maggie, when her fears of Mr. Hancorn had been subdued, joyfully fell in with the scheme proposed ; and so it happened that, in course of time, instead of three rooms in a lodging-house, the widow and her children occupied a modest little cottage of their own.



CHAPTER VII.

ONE END OF A TANGLED SKEIN.

FIVE years have passed away since the events related in the last chapter. What has Mr. Edward Yarrow been doing during this period? We all know that it was his purpose in life to make money by any means, however disgraceful, and he had succeeded to his heart's content. It was Fred's purpose to get money for an honest end and by honest means, however hard he had to work; but his father's partner had it in his heart to become rich all at once, and looked with contempt upon the hand of the diligent.

Mr. Graham, however, was mistaken when he

said that at his death Yarrow would appear as a rich man. He went about in the seediest of clothes, and looked, apparently, broken down by his misfortunes. He professed himself ready to take the humblest situation, and thus to a great extent succeeded in quenching the suspicion that he had gained anything by Mr. Graham's death, or that the failure of the house was in any way to be attributed to his mismanagement. All the time, however, he was gathering all together and preparing to take his journey into a distant land. At length he did so, and for two years his London acquaintances—he had few friends—had heard nothing of him, and had quite lost sight of him. All Fred Graham's inquiries resulted in no valid information, and Mr. Hancorn would say sometimes, with his hard office smile, 'Where is the unravelling? Is it ever to take place?'

'I believe it will,' was the firm response; 'but it will be done by God and not by us.'

'Well said, Fred,' cried Mr. Cartwright, still

a vigorous hale man, though approaching four-score years, and who was a frequent visitor at the counting-house. 'Well said ; if we would trust more in God and less in our own boasted strength and wisdom, we should have got to the bottom of many a mystery before now,—this one, perhaps, among the rest.'

Fred was now Mr. Hancorn's confidential clerk, very highly esteemed by him, and handsomely remunerated for his services. It was by very slow degrees that he gained his master's confidence. For more than two years he only received a slight increase of salary, but after that it had steadily gone up, and he was able to surround his mother and sister with many of the little elegances and comforts which had belonged to them in their old home. There was no necessity now, so far as money went, to continue her instructions to Mr. Hancorn's two daughters ; but between them and herself and Maggie included, there had grown up such a fervent affection that it would have been a

real grief to her to have relinquished her post ; and so, from time to time, she visited them more as a friend than an instructress.

No increase of salary had tended to make Fred either indolent or careless ; on the contrary, he redoubled his diligence, and many times, when the pleasures of home would have been more congenial than the dry details of the counting-house, worked double tides with his unflagging master, when the assistants in the warehouse had given up work. Mr. Hancorn never thanked him in so much as a word for these extra efforts, nor did Fred look for thanks, but after the hardest night's work would appear fresh and bright in the counting-house the next morning at the regular hour. Yet Mr. Hancorn never forgot one of Fred's efforts ; he treasured them all in his heart, and fervently blessed the day that had given him so faithful and zealous a helper.

With his old schoolfellows Fred frequently kept up a hearty and loving correspondence,

especially with little Markham, who for three or four years had been the manager of his father's branch bank in one of the largest cities of the Colonies. Markham told delightful stories of Australian life, of bush excursions, of excitements by flood and field, of the growing prosperity of the colonists; he only wanted one thing to complete his happiness, he said, and that was to have his old friend by his side. If he would only come over, he would make as much money in one year as he would in ten by staying in London. To repeated and most kind offers of assistance Fred returned a decided but kind refusal.

'By the way, who do you think is here? You would never guess, so I will tell you at once;—dear old Fairhurst, our writing master in the olden time! He came into the bank trembling as usual, and said that he had seen a name that was affectionately familiar to him in England, and wanted to satisfy himself whether it belonged to a very kind friend of

his. Could he see Mr. Markham? Of course he could, and he was immediately shown into my room. Wasn't I glad to see him! The poor fellow wept like a child; he told me that his health had failed, and that he had been advised to seek another climate. He was in search of employment, and would I, for the sake of old times, especially one Saturday afternoon, give him the benefit of my advice? The first thing I did was to give him the best dinner that my cook could put on the table at half an hour's notice; then I put a bank note in his hand and sent him away to recruit his strength, on the decided understanding that he was to come back to me when he had spent all his money. In about a fortnight he returned almost a new man, without a tremble in speech or gait. I gave him an easy post in the bank, and he is now one of my most valued and confidential clerks.'

This news filled Fred's heart with great delight. He had often asked within himself what

had become of Fairhurst, for he had never forgotten the part he took in the purchase of his father's portrait; and now to find that he was comfortably under the wing of one of his old pupils was beyond all that he could have desired on his behalf. He was therefore considerably surprised when, by the very next mail, he received a brief note from Markham to the following effect:—

‘Circumstances of the deepest importance, affecting the welfare of many, yourself among them, have rendered it imperatively necessary that Mr. Fairhurst should return to England, and he will arrive almost as soon as you receive this letter. He will tell you what I do not think it prudent to commit to writing. Pay him all attention at my charges, though you would do that, I am sure, without any suggestion on my part. Prepare yourself, Fred, to hear news that will astonish you, if you are capable of astonishment.’

Having read the letter, he put it into Mr.

Hancorn's hands without a word; indeed, he was so excited and startled that he had no words at his command. His employer read it once, twice, thrice; then handed it back, simply saying, 'He knows his way here, I suppose. The name of the vessel by which he sails is not mentioned; that was for prudential reasons, perhaps, too. Well, we shall soon know what there is to be known; now to business.' But all the morning, and all the afternoon and evening, the merchant was restless, constantly peering through the glass door of his counting-house when any stranger entered. No Mr. Fairhurst appeared that day, nor on the next; but on the third, as the clerks were about to leave, a gentleman, whose face was bronzed by a sea voyage, entered, and asked whether Mr. Graham was within?

'Show the gentleman in here,' cried Mr. Hancorn in an excited shrill treble; 'and the sooner the house is closed, the better I shall like it.' It was Mr. Fairhurst at last, and the greeting

was of the most cordial character between master and pupil.

‘This is my kind master, Mr. Hancorn,’ said Fred, ‘to whom I owe everything since my father died.’

‘As I owe everything to a certain never-to-be-forgotten Saturday afternoon,’ murmured the new-comer.

‘Now, a truce to all remembrances,’ said the merchant, ‘until you have had some tea. Here it is; make yourself at home, so that you may the sooner tell us why you have come all these thousands of miles.’

‘You must know, sir,’ said Fairhurst, presently, ‘that we have had amongst the recent arrivals in our city a very dashing English gentleman. He has lived in the best hotels, he has driven the most spirited horses, and, in short, has conducted himself generally in such a fashion as to give the impression that his wealth was boundless. Mr. Markham and myself had often heard of him, but it was never

our lot to meet with him until about a week before the letter was despatched to Mr. Graham. One morning he came into the bank, and early as it was, it was evident that he was not half sober. He asked to see the manager, but was told that he was absent from the city for the day. Could he see any one in authority capable of advancing money, say a thousand pounds, on good security? Certainly he could; Mr. Markham's confidential clerk was in his room, and would see him immediately. He was ushered into the bank parlour, a card having been previously sent in bearing the name of Russel Osborne, Esq., Brunswick Square, London, and accompanied by several letters of introduction from many of your best known city merchants, the late Mr. Graham among the rest.'

Fred and Mr. Hancorn started violently, but Fairhurst, quietly raising a forefinger in deprecation of interruption, quietly went on: 'I cannot tell how it was, but I took, instinctively,

an aversion to the man's card, and to his letters of introduction; but, of course, when he entered I received him with all courtesy. Gentlemen, I knew him at once!

There was another violent start on the part of Fred and his employer; but Fairhurst, once more raising a warning forefinger, resumed the thread of his narrative. "What can I have the pleasure of doing for you, sir, by the recommendation of these gentlemen well known to us?"

"Why, you see, sir," he said, "I would have far sooner seen the principal than yourself, but I have no doubt you can help me in a little temporary difficulty."

"We shall be most happy if we can do so."

"I have run short of money, and unfortunately, until I receive remittances from England, parchment money is all that I possess."

"But that is good enough, provided it *is* good," I quietly replied.

"Yes, if I were known; but the truth is, to accommodate a friend of long standing I ad-

vanced a large sum of money on deeds and documents which now may not be worth the parchment they are engrossed upon."

"Let me see one of them,—the one, for instance, on which you want to raise a thousand or so," I said in a careless tone. With a trembling hand he took from a little valise, a document signed by your father, Fred, devising to'—

'Yarrow!' cried the little merchant in the greatest excitement, and Fred at the word started to his feet.

'Patience, gentlemen. Yes, to Yarrow, more than three thousand pounds from his personal estate at that time, being worth so much, etc., etc. I knew Mr. Graham's signature well, and knew also that he had been dead years before. It was in my heart to brand Yarrow then and there as a forger and a thief. He had seen me at the sale, but now he did not recognise me—I had grown so stout and well; but, through all his dissipation, I recognised the

man who had been present at the sale, doing all in his power to make the bidding go higher until Mr. Cartwright succeeded in turning the tables upon him, and in obtaining for an orphan son the portrait of his father.

“This matter, Mr. Osborne, in the absence of my principal, is rather too serious for me to deal with; but if you will call again in the evening, I have no doubt he will be in.”

“It will be after banking hours,” said the so-called Osborne sulkily.

“That will make no difference, I assure you; and if you have any other deeds or documents—we are in want of honest paper just now—I think I may say that we can do it for you on as favourable terms as any other house in the city. Meanwhile, upon my giving you a receipt in the name of the Firm, you may as well leave this (holding up the document signed professedly by the late Mr. Graham), that Mr. Markham may have an opportunity of inspecting it.”

“That is but fair,” he returned in a sleepy tone of voice; “and I have other documents.”

“Bring them, by all means, with you, and whatever they are worth you shall have,” I answered, endeavouring to force a smile.

‘Promising to return at the appointed time, he sauntered out of the bank parlour.

‘Gentlemen, it has been mercifully arranged that criminals, by some incautious word or act almost too slight to attract attention, have made their detection sure. It was so in this case. Excited by wine, this man had incautiously put himself within the power of his worst enemy, namely, Fred’s best friend, and mine too.

‘When Mr. Markham returned, the bank was closed, and almost in a whisper I told him all that had occurred,—how God had given him now the opportunity to help his old school-fellow, and to remove the stigma attached to his father’s name. Mr. Markham was very much excited, and in his excitement asked even me what he should do. My reply was, to cover

immediately the table with bank notes and gold by the side of "Mr. Osborne's" document.

'There was a ring at the bell, and on the door being opened, in Mr. Osborne came, very cool and collected. He threw a greedy glance at the notes and gold, and felt encouraged when he saw the document he had left in the morning not far from them.

"I am sorry I was not in in the morning, sir, but I am willing now to devote any reasonable time to your requirements."

"Why, the truth is," said the new-comer, "I have been thinking the matter over since I was here this morning, and I have been thinking that I may as well have ten thousand as one since I am about it, and I have brought the necessary documents as security for that amount."

"Ten thousand, happily, are no more than one to us, provided your security is good: let me see what you have to offer."

'Mr. Markham inspected the parchments nar-

rowly in silence for some minutes, and his face flushed as he proceeded in the investigation. Suddenly he started up, and in a voice under which the impostor quailed, said, "Your name is Yarrow!"

'There was a furious rush to the door; but our stout hall-porter immediately appeared with his mountain-like back, shutting it close.

"Now, Yarrow, listen to me; your sin has at last found you out. I am rather doubtful at the moment how to act; I might deliver you into custody for these forgeries," taking up the letters and the document which had been left in the morning, "but I choose, on my own responsibility, to lock you up to-night, and to have you strictly guarded. In the morning I may have found out what is the right thing to do with the oppressor of the widow and the fatherless."

'Mr. Markham did not sleep a wink that night, and early in the morning we were once more closeted together.

"Fairhurst," he said, "you must go to Eng-

land by the next mail, and get Fred's authority to prosecute, if he will not come over. It is evident to me that this wicked fellow has in his possession the true deeds, of which these are forgeries, and that he will hold to them as long as he can. Fred is so obstinate that he will not come over : if he would come, all might be set right in an hour, for this coward, sooner than undergo transportation for life, would reveal everything and give up everything. Tell Fred from me that if he will come over by the next mail, he may clear his dear father's name, and get back no small portion of his own property to boot. Start at once, Fairhurst ; and if Edward Yarrow escapes from me until you are back again, then my name is not Edwin Markham. This is the object of my visit, gentlemen.'

Fred has often told me that he never saw Mr. Hancorn thoroughly excited but once, and that was on this occasion. To do him justice, the expectation of getting back what he himself had lost by Yarrow had but little to do with it ; it

was the joy he felt in the thought that his old friend Graham's name would stand clear before the world, and that the widow and orphans would no longer be defrauded of their right, that made him forget his office manner altogether, and show himself a man of deep and thorough feeling.

'Fred,' he said in tones that were gentle for him, 'there is no help for it; I shall miss you very much, but go you must. Come along with me to your mother, and let us have a family council. When does the next mail go out, Fairhurst? But I ought to know that as well as you; it sails the day after to-morrow. Come, then, at once.'





CHAPTER VIII.

A TALK WITH MOTHER.

AS Mr. Hancorn uttered these last words, there was a light tap at the office door, and upon his crying 'Come in' in a shriller treble than usual, for he did not wish to be interrupted, Mrs. Graham, accompanied by his daughter Clara, not without some trepidation, entered the room. At the sight of the two the little merchant's features immediately relaxed into a genial home smile, and with almost ceremonious grace and courtesy he placed chairs for them. At the sight of Clara, a blushing little beauty of fifteen, Fred's face wore a flush rosy as a sunrise.

‘You know it’s against orders for you to call here in business hours,’ he said, with whimsical irritability. ‘What do you want, pray? What *you* can want in a gentleman’s office at all, you little puss,’ addressing Clara, as at the same time he gently patted her head, ‘must be a mystery to all the fathers and merchants in creation.’

‘We did not know you were particularly engaged at this hour, Mr. Hancorn,’ said Fred’s mother, who by this time had come tolerably well to understand his ways.

‘Fred and I are always engaged, most particularly engaged, while we are *here*, ma’am; but when we are not here, I hope we are not particularly engaged about anything. What do you want?’

‘Oh! a very slight favour, sir. Maggie and Florence have been together all the afternoon, and Clara has come round to beg you to come with us to tea, that we may have a pleasant evening together.’

‘Humph! we have *had* tea,—this gentleman,

Fred's old writing master, Mr. Fairhurst, who has come all the way from Australia to see him, and myself,—so we three don't want any more tea ; but you can get us some supper if you like.'

'That we will most readily,' responded Mrs. Graham, cordially extending her hand to Mr. Fairhurst, of whom she had heard many pleasing accounts from her son.

'The fact is, ma'am, without any invitation at all, we were all going to take you by storm, and should have been with you in less than half-an-hour. In about that time you may expect us three to talk upon most important—*most* important business.'

The evening in Mrs. Graham's house, which she had anticipated as being a very pleasant one, was somewhat silent and lugubrious. Fairhurst, with the heavy sense of responsibility resting upon him, was not at his ease, and could not be 'drawn out.' The little merchant was harassed about the manner in which

Mrs. Graham would receive the proposition about Fred's setting sail for Australia in less than twenty-four hours. As for Fred, as he looked at mother and sister, and at Clara, who had been a sister equally gentle and loving, he began half to wish that they might remain in their present moderate but most comfortable circumstances, and never have another thought of growing rich.

'The truth is, ma'am, Fred must go to Australia, and must set sail the day after to-morrow,' said Mr. Hancorn bluntly. 'His outfit is ordered, his berth has been taken, and he will be accompanied by his old friend, this gentleman here.'

The widow turned pale, and faintly murmured, 'To Australia! I thought his place was to be with you, his kind friend, for life.'

'So it will be, ma'am, no doubt of that; he and I know each other too well to separate; *that* you may be sure of.'

'Fred,' said Maggie and Mr. Hancorn's two

daughters in the same breath, as their tears started into their eyes, 'to Australia! all that long way!'

'Now, you girls,' said the little merchant in a husky voice, and shading his eyes with his hands that some tears which found their way unbidden there might not be seen—'Now, you girls, go back to the piano, or sit down quietly here while I tell a story that has not been told for any length of time, for some years. Listen to me, Mrs. Graham. Some years ago in the city of London there was a man whose word was his bond, and who was the very soul of honour and integrity. He believed in his fellow-creatures more than he ought to have believed; he believed in one man, in one villain rather, in whom he ought never to have believed at all!'

Mrs. Graham started, and grew paler yet.

'Patience, madam,' continued Mr. Hancorn gently. 'That man robbed him, dragged his honourable name into the dirt, sold him off;

did not leave his wife and two children so much as a bed to lie on. That man has at length been found. His name is YARROW!' shouted the merchant in an excited voice. 'We can make him give up a great deal of the plunder, I have no doubt; but, better than that, we can force him to clear my friend Graham's good name; so that, whatever Fred's future may be, no one shall be able by so much as a whisper, or the raising of a finger, to bring a slur upon his honourable name and fame. Fred, my boy, when you came to me, that was your earnest resolve.'

'It is unchanged, sir,' said the youth firmly; 'and, although something of the heat of passion with which I framed that resolve has been moderated during the years of healthy discipline I have passed since then, it is as resolute as ever.'

'Fred,' said Maggie, as she stood by him with an arm tenderly thrown round his neck, 'go to Australia, go to the world's end, if

need be, to clear dear papa's name; not for the sake of the money, not for the sake of revenge, you know, my dear, but because it is a duty you owe to the best of fathers.'

'Good girl; she is really about the most sensible girl I have known for many a day,' said Mr. Hancorn, looking at Clara.

'I say the same,' said that young damsel, but with a very pale face and with a slight tremor in her voice.

'Now, Mrs. Graham, what do you say?'

'I feel it is the Lord's will that he *must* go, and I can only pray that his God and Father will have him in His holy keeping.'

Mr. Hancorn's delight at the success of this little negotiation—the result of which he had anticipated with some anxiety—was overflowing; and he now said that they might begin to enjoy the evening in earnest. It only needed the entrance of the family's old and trusty friend, Mr. Cartwright, to cause the little merchant's joy to become quite exuberant.

The old man received the intelligence which Mr. Hancorn had to relate with a grave and kindly countenance. Pleased he was beyond measure that there was a chance of Fred's father's name being cleared; more pleased was he still, if possible, that time had so softened the youth's spirit that he cherished no feeling of revenge in the detection of the culprit who had wrought him and those dear to him so much wrong. 'I remember two days especially,' said Mr. Cartwright tremulously, 'in which Fred Graham's Resolve deeply impressed me. The first was the day of the funeral, when the lad, much younger than he is now, actually made Yarrow's face blanche with terror as he told him the truth about himself. "It shall be the business of my life," he said, "to unravel the mystery in which my father's affairs are entangled; and I devote myself from this hour to the purpose."' "

'I remember,' said Mr. Hancorn, 'a similar thing in my office, Cartwright, the day you

brought him to see me, and when I gave him so strong a drilling that a far older head, heart, and hand than his might well have flinched under it.' Fred's face grew crimson with delight as he heard these words of praise from one who seldom indulged in expressions of this kind. His maxim was, that if boy or man did well, what they did carried its own reward with it, and that any verbal recognition of it tended considerably to weaken its force. 'The other occasion which I vividly recall,' continued Mr. Cartwright, 'was when he said that, notwithstanding the resoluteness of his purpose, it was beyond the reach of his poor powers to unravel the mystery, and that he left its solution in higher hands. From that moment I felt sure that the case was left where it ought to be ; and that, sooner or later, the dark would be made light, and the crooked straight. And so, in the providence of Him who is too wise to err, and who sees the end from the beginning, it has turned out.'

'I am not so good as you, Cartwright,' said Mr. Hancorn ; 'I wish I were ! but I assure you I have no feeling of revenge in this matter. Revenge is not only unchristian, it is foolish and unbusiness-like. Yet I must confess that I feel a great sense of satisfaction in the thought that the only man who ever took me in is now on the way to being brought to justice. Why, sir, that man Yarrow soured my spirit, and made me unjust towards scores whom I might have, and ought to have, helped, for months afterwards. The thought of Yarrow always interposed between their need and my power to help ; and I candidly confess that it was not until I saw how forgiving and quiet a certain young friend of ours was, who had suffered far more than ever I had done, that a different mood took possession of me. I declare that, for that young friend, I would go to Australia myself to see him, and those dear to him, righted.'

There were tears in the good little merchant's



eyes, which he did not care to conceal now, and every one in the little family council honoured and loved him in their heart of hearts. Beneath a rugged and, at first sight, somewhat repelling exterior, there was a heart capable of an affection as deep, true, and tender as the most loving woman ever cherished. Fred drew nearer to him, and the girls nearer yet. The former took his hand, and having cordially shaken it, respectfully pressed it to his lips. The girls were more demonstrative, and, throwing their arms round his neck, kissed face and forehead scores of times, saying after each salute, 'You dear ; you darling ; you dear, *dear*, DEAR darling.'

'Now, Mrs. Graham,' cried the merchant, with a radiant face, 'I must beg of you to come to the rescue, and to make an end of this. What have I said or done that I should deserve an ordeal such as that which I have just passed through? Get along with you, *do*,' he said, playfully waving them off. 'It's all Mrs.

Graham's fault ; she spoiled Maggie first, then Florence, then Clara.'

'But she has not spoiled Fred,' said Clara in her little impetuous voice, and still retaining her hold on her father's neck.

'Humph ! that remains to be seen. Dear Mrs. Graham, is supper ready ? I am quite exhausted. These little flirts, ma'am, ought to be put to bed at eight o'clock every night for a fortnight, to teach them good manners ; I hope you will see to it, ma'am. We can't have little bits of children like these imitating their elders in this way, you know ; the mere idea is preposterous ; and we shall have the world turned upside down—mark my words, ma'am—before we are ten years older, ma'am, if matters are allowed to progress in this way.'

Although the merchant talked in this vein, it was evidently with a view to keep up the spirits of the little party ; for, after Mr. Cartwright had read a psalm, and had, in pathetic tones, and more pathetic words, commended



Fred to the care of Him who layeth the beams of His chambers in the water, and walketh upon the wings of the wind, there was no one who said 'Good-bye' to the widow and orphans with a more subdued and even sorrowful countenance.







CHAPTER IX.

OUTWARD BOUND.

IT was late at night. Mr. Hancorn, Mr. Cartwright, Mr. Fairhurst, Clara, and Florence, had long since taken their departure, yet Mrs. Graham, Maggie, and Fred still lingered round the fire. We have the highest authority for saying that we know not what a day may bring forth; but, truly, this day of their lives had brought forth wondrous things, and on this thought their conversation chiefly turned.

‘Who would have thought it,’ said Maggie, with an attempt at cheerfulness, ‘of the boy whose head I saw so deeply buried in his

desk the day I came to fetch him from school? But *now* you are so brave, you can do anything you like, my dear.' She said the words intending to encourage him, although her mother held up a hushing forefinger.

'But he *could* and *did* everything that Dr. Warrington required of him,' said the little beauty resolutely, with the accustomed stamp of her resolute little foot.

'Better not speak of those days,' replied her mother gently; 'you know what a trouble they were to him and us—poor boy! He has been the best of sons and the best of brothers, but he has always had a sorrow, Maggie, on which you and I, dearly as we loved him, dared not encroach. Yet, what a MAN he has been to us during the last five or six years! It did not escape me that he had troubles in the office, yet we never heard a word of them at home; even at midnight, when he came home, he brought either sunshine or noon-day along with him.'

Fred continued stedfastly looking at the fire, after a jaded day's work, with that 'dismal old curmudgeon look' which mother and sister put down to the office treatment of the best friends they had ever had in their lives.

'You know it was his intention from the first,' said Maggie, giving her brother a cheerful shake by the shoulder, for which she atoned the moment afterwards by an affectionate kiss, 'not to allow either you or me to do a stroke of work, and he has carried out his plan to the letter; yet there he sits like a dump, while our fortunes are made, if we are to believe Mr. Hancorn; and if we can't believe him, in whom are we to believe, I should like to know?'

'In God,' said Fred, at the close of a long conversation which mother and daughter had had entirely to themselves. 'Mother and Maggie,' he went on in affectionate tones, 'for the tender love you have shown me I cannot be sufficiently grateful. For your unwearying patience, your never-failing kindness, and love,

and courage, in all seasons, at all hours of day or night,—for the hope that you have never allowed me even for an hour to lose sight of, how can I sufficiently thank you—how can I?’

‘And pray, sir,’ said Maggie, with a more impetuous stamp of her little foot than ever, and literally clasping her brother by neck and arms, ‘what have *you* been to us? Has there been a better, braver boy in all the world? Tell me his name, and I will marry him to-morrow, provided I get dear mamma’s consent, and yours too, I suppose, you little lord of creation.’

‘Maggie,’ said her mother deprecatingly, ‘don’t be foolish; listen to Fred; you know he never speaks unless he has something worth hearing to say.’

‘I was going to say,’ went on Fred in slow and measured tones, ‘that a very strong superstition which I had in earlier years has to-night almost taken complete possession of me. You will forgive me, dear mother and Maggie, but the thought that in a few days I shall be

hundreds of miles from the home which you have made so happy, *so* happy, has made me very melancholy, and I have imagined'—

'You ought not to give yourself to imagination, sir,' said Maggie ; 'it is a most dangerous pursuit. I heard an old clergyman say the other day, to whom I took a little milk and eggs without any gracious message from yourself, that if he could only Nebuchadnezzarize for two or three days, he should be himself again, although the doctors had given him up.'

'What do you mean?'

'Why, that he had too much mind, and that if, without suspicion of madness, he might be allowed to go out and graze for a few days, like the beasts of the fields, and forget all about himself, he would get all right again directly. But now tell us all about your superstition, sir ; I insist upon every word of it that will make it clear to those moderate comprehensions that have never had to deal with the details

which are "the daily round and trivial task" of Mr. Hancorn's office.'

'You are a silly puss,' said Fred, affectionately kissing the young and tender face which was already pressed closely to his own. 'Listen then, and be alarmed,' he went on with tones of mock solemnity: 'I have seen purses fly out of the fire nearly at my very feet, and they seemed large enough to contain any amount of money; and there were times when I could have wished, for you and mother's sake, that I could have filled them with all the gold which you have lost.'

'Good boy!'

'Listen again, Maggie,'—and she shuddered as he went on,—'I have seen coffins and winding sheets fall around my feet, and the question has sounded in my ears, like a voice from heaven, "What shall it profit a man though he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"'

‘But Fred, dear boy, this has been your axiom, as you call it, right through life; why need you to-night feel the force of it more than on any other night in the year?’

This question was asked with a tremulous voice by his mother, and Maggie was all attention for the reply.

‘Because, mother dear, I am not quite myself to-night, and I feel as if I were losing everything dear to me when parting from my little home, perchance never to see it again.’

‘Fred, dear Fred! I will go with you,’ said Maggie; ‘mamma dear, say I may,’ and she burst into a tempest of weeping; ‘it will be for the best, dear mamma. I can’t leave poor Fred to go on this journey alone. Say YES, dear mamma, and let me go.’

The decision of the child, as may be imagined, was at first received with consternation by the mother. Long through the silent night the case was ‘argued,’ as the lawyers say; but before daybreak Mr. Hancorn was in the par-

lour once more, saying, after he had kissed Maggie, and called her the most sensible girl in the world, that all his resources respecting outfit and a comfortable berth were freely at her command. It was decided that Maggie should accompany Fred by the good ship 'Sparta,' which was ready to sail in less than twenty-four hours' time.

It was a dreary morning in November when Fred and Maggie joined the ship at Gravesend. They were not alone. Early as it was, Fred's generous old master; Fred's loving and disinterested friend the venerable Mr. Cartwright; Fred's enthusiastic little Clara, and, because she was fond of Fred and Maggie both combined, her equally enthusiastic and gentle sister Florence; Fred's mother, with an outward face of hope which utterly belied her inward grief; several old warehousemen who had won his esteem and love by his unvarying willingness to help everybody, to whom Mr. Hancorn said, with the most pleasant irritability

of temper and voice that could ever have been heard in this world, 'What are you doing here at this time of day? You *know*, you KNOW, you ought to be at business at this time; but stop, you may be useful, you know, for half-an-hour or so, then get back as quick as you can;' then, dipping his hand into his pocket, and giving them far more than enough to take them back to the city, 'you know you had no business here; now *had* you? tell the truth.' But because they were truthful and grateful the men chose to give no answer.

-As the gallant ship slowly made way down the river, and, carefully piloted, was seen approaching for more than half-an-hour than it was time to take boat, there were some very sad and fond farewells taken and exchanged. Fred all the time had one arm round his mother's neck, and the other clasped his brave little sister to his heart. Holding close to the hand of this brave little sister, was Clara, who, with pale but most courage-

ous face, occasionally glanced into Fred's eyes, and was more than repaid by a look which invariably seemed to say, 'It is all right, Clara; it is all right.' Once the child—for she was little more—in the sweet innocence of childhood, raised her pure lips to kiss his cheek and forehead, and said, 'For Maggie's sake, for her dear mamma's sake, be a brave boy, Fred.' 'For your sake, too, darling little one, as well as theirs,' was the tender response. Mr. Cartwright had no words to speak, as the vessel drew nearer and nearer; neither had the warehousemen for a while,—when they found their voice, it was to say to Mr. Hancorn, in rough monotonous, 'They had come down for a purpose, and for one only, and that was to see the last of one who had ever treated them with gentleness and kindness.'

'The last! what do you mean, you—you—you—I don't know what to say,' cried the little old gentleman, glad to get any excuse for bursting into a great rage.





There was a waving of pocket-handkerchiefs as the ship glided away —
FRED GRAHAM'S RESOLVE, page 119.

‘Here’s the ship, master,’ said one of the men, ‘and the sooner we get afloat the better.’ There was a regular scramble of embraces on the spot where the vessel’s arrival had been patiently awaited for more than an hour; then Mr. Hancorn, accompanied by Fred, Mr. Fairhurst, and the indomitable little Maggie, were swiftly rowed to meet the ‘Sparta.’ Those on shore saw them toilsomely get on board, and then there was a waving of pocket-handkerchiefs on board and ashore; then, they saw Mr. Hancorn, as one on whom the stroke of death had fallen, sink back into the boat as the ship glided away, to lie unconscious for more than an hour, and to be seriously ill for more than fourteen days. On his recovery it was to learn by the first newspaper he took up that the ‘Sparta’ was wrecked, and that all on board were irrevocably lost.



CHAPTER X.

THE AWAKENING HOUR OF CONSCIENCE.



VER the deep, over the deep, over the salt, salt sea, helped on by a favourable breeze, and commanded by one of the most experienced captains, to whom the ocean seemed as familiar as the streets of his native town to a landsman, the good ship rode gallantly along. It was quite a new world to Fred and Maggie, and Mr. Fairhurst had quite as much as he could do to moderate their excitement. There were the pleasant stories of the sailors to listen to, and they, finding that they had good listeners in Fred and Maggie, told of adventures and hair-breadth escapes

more surprising than true. There were wealthy settlers, who, having given a last look at 'England, home, and beauty,' were returning to their adopted country to spend the remainder of their days. They had strange stories to tell of bush life, bush rangers, hunting expeditions, and of the extremities to which they were reduced when first they landed in a strange country. There were emigrants going out full of hope that in a new world they might earn the living which they had failed to get in the old. Shipbuilders, bricklayers, blacksmiths, clerks, persons of almost every description, were on their way to seek their fortune; some by steady industry in their own line of life, others by going to the gold-fields to become rich all at once. There were young mothers with babies in their arms on board, and to these the gentle heart of Maggie was affectionately drawn. Although a first class passenger, she was often in the steerage, nursing and singing to the little ones, taking little delicacies to them when they

were ill, and helping their mothers in a hundred quiet ways. She became known in the ship as 'the good little nurse,' and rough-handed, rugged-hearted men, who would have been softened by no verbal teaching, however much to the point, were melted by her unostentatious kindness and gentleness, and blessed her name night and morning. Fred heard his sweet sister's praises sung with a glow of pride mantling over his handsome features; if he had a wish beyond any other, it was that her mother might see how good and how beloved her child was in the new and strange circumstances in which she was placed. Night and morning they joined in simple prayer together, and because they were in the hands of God, felt as safe on the sea as if they were on dry land.

They had been out at sea about a fortnight when a furious gale sprang up which tested the good ship's strength and capabilities to the utmost. If the gale lulled for a few minutes,

it was only to gain new strength, and the passengers, with terror-stricken faces, found themselves hemmed in by a raving wind and rolling sea. The vessel rolled and pitched fearfully, and shipped every now and then large quantities of water. Fore and main staysails were violently torn away and went flying away into the storm. Both lifeboat and cutter, with which the 'Sparta' was provided, were carried away by the violence of the sea; the ship was in a hurricane, the like of which the oldest seaman on board had never seen.

We must leave our three friends in these perilous circumstances, and return to the Australian city in which their arrival was so anxiously expected by Edwin Markham.

Edwin had been true to his word, and Edward Yarrow, although not in the hands of the police, was in safe custody. It was not until after long deliberation that Edwin determined that he himself would be Yarrow's jailor until Fred Graham arrived. If he had had any hesi-

tation in the matter, it was decisively settled for him the day after Fairhurst sailed for England. Yarrow became dangerously ill. The life of pleasure that he had been leading had so told on his constitution, that now, when he found out that he was known in his true character, that all his plans and schemes were brought to nought, and that at any moment he might be consigned to prison, he completely sunk under his discomfiture and gnashed his teeth with rage. In a few hours he was in raving delirium, and Edwin at once placed him under the best medical advice.

It was now that through a mysterious providence all the secrets of his base and wicked life were made known to the man from whom, of all others, he would have given worlds to conceal them. It was not to be. Secrets which he had fondly imagined were securely locked in his own breast, and which he had never confided to any one, were talked of as the most common occurrences; and at intervals, almost step by

step, in his ravings he told a connected story of his baseness and ingratitude.

‘Here I am in Mr. Graham’s counting-house at last,’ he said, with a wild laugh, ‘and here I mean to remain until I have turned him out of it, and made it my own. What do I care for that baby-faced wife of his, though she is a relative? What do I care for the baby-faced boy and girl? This place is to be Fred’s, is it? No, never; it shall be mine, or my name is not Edward Yarrow! But softly,’ and here his voice would sink almost to a whisper, ‘there must be no suspicion; Graham must suspect nothing; nobody must suspect anything; I must appear as a humble dependant upon a kind benefactor’s bounty, and ingratiate myself with all his connection. That’s a good card, I think! Yes, and I will play it, and win the game.’

At another time his soliloquy was on this wise:—

‘I have done the best day’s work I ever did

in my life ; I can imitate Graham's signature so well that he himself would never discover it to be a forgery ; more than that, I can imitate the handwriting of the most influential among his correspondents. This ought to be worth money to me, and it shall. I will make Graham's mind easy about the business, and encourage him to keep out of the way ; then the field is all my own.'

Edwin heard him with a shudder, but carefully noted down every word he said, firmly believing that he was on the way to the unravelling of a dark and wicked mystery. Nor was he mistaken ; for Yarrow, as if taking up the thread of his own sinful story, went on :—

'Graham has gone home to die, and every stick he possesses is mine ; deeds, outstanding accounts, house, furniture,—everything, and I'll have everything that I may begin the life I have always intended to lead. Shall I raise money at once upon the deeds ? No ; I know

a trick worth two of that; I will keep the originals, and make a good trade out of copies in a foreign country where people are not quite so sharp and suspicious as they are here. Suspicious! who *can* suspect Edward Yarrow?’

The doctor, who was present at this last outburst, looked significantly at Edwin, as much as to say that this was more a case for the police than a physician; but Markham, by a word or two of explanation, secured his sympathy and co-operation at once. ‘We shall hear more presently; and I trust I shall hear what I would give any money to hear.’

‘That sale was a good thing,’ Yarrow went on, with a wild laugh. ‘Didn’t I run the prices up in spite of the brokers? I did it because everything was coming to me. “Give the boy his father’s portrait,” said that meek-faced old Cartwright. Well, he has got it, and much good may it do him. I have got

something far more valuable—all the cash; and it shall be in a strong box very soon, and I shall forgive any man who finds a key to open it.'

His face altered, and his voice again sank to a whisper. 'I wish I had that strong box here,' he went on rapidly; 'it has never been out of my sight so long before, though I have travelled thousands of miles, and it contains far more thousands than ever I have travelled. Landlord, landlord!' he shouted, 'bring me my strong box; I want it. Your house is the most respectable in the city, I am told. I heard in England that I should get every attention at the Queen's. It does not seem like it. Bring me my box; it contains—you don't know what it contains; bring it, I say!' and the guilty wretch stretched forth his hands to receive his treasure. Not receiving it, he sank back in a paroxysm of rage, and presently became insensible.

'Now, Dr. Murray,' said Edwin firmly, 'my

course is clear. I must have that strong box at any cost. Go you, as one of my oldest friends in this city, to the Queen's, and state what you know of this man's critical condition ; pay his bill, 'whatever it is, and request that all belonging to him may be sent here without an hour's delay. They know me well enough to be sure that I, at least, will tamper with no strong box, however strong.'

His friend needed no second entreaty, and within an hour the box was in the room of the fever-stricken Yarrow. Even in his delirium, when he awoke from the paroxysm into which he had fallen, the sight of the box had a soothing effect upon his mind. 'There it is, there it is,' he murmured ; 'the landlord is an honest fellow after all ; but after all, if he had taken it, he could not have opened it, for I have the key, and no one knows where it is but myself. Softly, softly, where is the key ? It used to be here in this secret pocket ;' and as he said the words, he fumbled first with his

left hand and then with his right at a secret pocket in an imaginary waistcoat. Not finding it, he burst into a wild yell of anger, and again became insensible.

‘Murray,’ said Markham, coolly taking up a waistcoat, and drawing forth a key, ‘without the slightest hesitation I take possession of this key.’

‘I think you are quite justified in doing so, after what I have heard.’

‘But you and I jointly, old friend, will place it in legal custody until Fred Graham arrives; then, in his presence, we will see what this strong box contains. It is the safest and wisest course,’ and in less than an hour the key was in safe keeping.

Weeks, months, rolled away, but no Fred Graham, no Fairhurst, made their appearance, and Yarrow, who had recovered his senses, was at the point of death. One morning there came most melancholy news to the city, which plunged hundreds into mourning. The

ship 'Sparta' had been wrecked, and it was supposed that all on board had perished. Markham was beside himself with grief and anxiety at the intelligence, and as vessel after vessel came in without a scrap of information concerning the lost ship, he began to give up the hope which he had so long fondly cherished, that to Fred himself Yarrow would make confession of his crime. It was a dismal winter evening when Yarrow himself first approached the subject. 'I am a dying man,' he said; 'I thank you much for your undeserved consideration. I have been found out at last. If you knew all'—

'I *do* know all,' said Markham; 'but guilty though you are, from my very soul I pity you. If only Fred were here!'

'Is he coming, sir?'

'He has been wrecked, I fear, and I may never look upon his handsome face again,' said Edwin with a sob.

'Then I have killed both father and son,'

said the conscience-stricken sinner with a groan, and hiding his face under the clothes, he wept unavailing tears of remorse. There was a loud knock at the door, at the sound of which Edwin ran rapidly down-stairs.







CHAPTER XI.

RESTITUTION.

THE loud knock at the door was accompanied by the sound of eager voices without, and by bright and cheery laughter. Edwin pushed the servant aside who was hastening to obey the summons, and with a hope too big for words, opened the door. 'Here we are at last, old boy!' cried Fred in his schoolboy tones, and no tones were ever pleasanter; 'here is Fairhurst safe and sound, and able to write a better hand than ever. This,' said Fred gently, 'is my sister, whom you used to know as a very little thing; she wouldn't trust me to come out alone even to see Eddy, about whom

she has so often heard. What a big fellow you have grown ! Why, you are quite an alderman, you know, and you have got a moustache and whiskers coming. Maggie, shake hands with Markham, your brother's best friend, and perhaps that will induce him to get out of the way, and to give us a shelter from this biting wind.'

Markham, laughing and crying together, seemed to have a hand for each of the three, and he soon had them in front of a cheerful fire in his dining-room, plying them with refreshments, while a good supper was being prepared. He himself literally feasted on the sight of the faces before him, and while they were telling him about a hundred things that they supposed would interest him, kept repeating, 'But you were all wrecked, you know; you were all drowned, you know; yet here you are!'

'It's a long and painful story, Eddy, and you shall hear all about it one day. We were



wrecked, and many brave fellows were lost ; but through God's mercy, Fairhurst's promptitude and presence of mind, and my sister's unwavering faith, we all got safe to land. There was not a man on board that wouldn't have given ten lives, if he had them, to save hers ; and when at last the ship broke up, one poor fellow, whose children she had been nursing, leaped with her into the boat, which was tossing about in a boiling sea, and placed her in his wife's arms, saying, with tones of intense thankfulness, " Here she is." The next moment a strong wave had washed him overboard.'

The hands of brother and sister were fondly locked together as Fred said these brief words ; but somehow or other the disengaged one of Maggie's presently found itself in that of Edwin's, and it seemed so natural a resting-place that she did not care to withdraw it.

' But now about this business, Markham,' said Fred ; ' there will be plenty of time to tell you all about our adventures by sea and land since

we last met when that is finished. Am I too late to do any good ?'

'I hope not,' replied Edwin, with a sorrowful, solemnized face ; 'I hope not.'

'What do you mean ?'

'Simply that the poor wretch who robbed you and yours is breathing his last up-stairs, and I have reason to believe that a large proportion of the property which he wickedly made his own is in the same room with him.'

Fred and Maggie heard these words with the profoundest astonishment, and could not continue the conversation. Markham wrote a hurried note to his legal adviser, informing him of Fred's arrival, and begging his attendance, with the key of the strong box, without a moment's delay. The note was promptly attended to, and before supper was over Dr. Murray and Mr. Lyndsay the solicitor were both in the house.

'Now, Maggie, if I may call you so,' said Edwin, with a pleasant smile ; 'it seems more

natural—now doesn't it?—than to get out the formal words of Miss Graham.'

'Pray don't apologize,' returned the young lady thus addressed; 'any friend of my dear, dear Fred's—and you, he has often told me, have been his best and most constant—must be my friend too, and I cannot look upon you as a stranger, although we have never exchanged words together until this evening. Oh! what is that dreadful groaning?'

'Maggie,' said Markham, whose face was pale with emotion, 'I am sorry that after all you have gone through, you should have such a dismal reception; but you are brave, you know, and I wish I had but a hundredth part of your courage to go and face the scene up-stairs. We men must go up, but you must stay down here.'

'Why?' she asked very earnestly.

'Because the sight would distress you very much, and we could not bear to see you distressed. A sinner's death-bed is not a sight for you to see.'

‘But oh! Edwin Markham,’ said Maggie, as if she had known him all her life, ‘the more sinful a man is, has he not a larger claim upon our pity? I will behave myself well, indeed I will; you need have no fear. If he is dying, let me go into a quiet corner of the room and pray for his departing spirit.’

Resistance to her wish after this appeal was impossible, and in a minute or two Fred and his sister, Dr. Murray, Mr. Lyndsay, Mr. Fairhurst, and Edwin Markham were in the room where Yarrow was lying sick unto death. Even in his last moments one hand was on the strong box, which had been placed close to the bed-side, and his fingers nervously clutched at it as if to keep him back from the eternity which was so imminently near. He was in a dreamy stupor when our friends entered the room, but Maggie and Fred had scarcely approached the bed when his eyes opened, and he said, in a voice stronger than that in which he had spoken for many

days, 'You have come to torment me before my time ; away with you !'

'Cousin Yarrow,' said Maggie tremulously.

'WHAT !'

'Cousin Yarrow—you are our cousin, you know—Fred and I have not come to disturb your last moments ; we would comfort you if we knew how. Mamma has never spoken about you since the day of poor papa's funeral ; but if she were here, I know she would say the same that I now say. If you have done us any wrong, and I have sometimes thought you have, we forgive you with all our hearts in the name of Him who taught us to say, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Fred, dear, tell him so, and tell him too that dear old Mr. Cartwright, and your kind friend Mr. Hancorn, would say just the same if they were here.'

The words, simply and affectionately spoken, had an almost magical effect upon the dying man. Without any assistance, he raised himself

into a sitting posture, and looked steadily at brother and sister.

‘I killed your father,’ he said in a hollow voice ;
‘I killed him as certainly as if I had stabbed him to the heart, or given him deadly poison !’

‘He is at rest, sweetly at rest in heaven, through the merits of our blessed Lord ; think and speak of yourself, cousin Yarrow,’ said Maggie most fervently, as the tears flowed down her cheeks.

‘I robbed you and your brother, took everything for myself, sold everything you possessed.’

‘Don’t think about that, cousin Yarrow, unless it is to make you very, very sorry, and to help you to ask God to forgive you for your sin,’ pleaded Maggie.

The mind of the dying man began to wander, notwithstanding his most powerful efforts to keep collected. Once more, first his left and then his right hand was at an imaginary waistcoat pocket, fumbling for the key which seemed never to be forthcoming.

‘I must have the key,’ he repeated passionately more than once ; ‘I thought I was amongst honest people : who can have stolen it ?’

Edwin Markham quietly placed the key in Maggie’s hand, and whispered a few words in her ear. When the dying man once more grew calm, she advanced to the bed, and said in firm tones, ‘Cousin Yarrow, here is the key for which you have been so long anxiously searching.’

‘What, then ! *you* have had it all the time,’ he said, with a ghastly stare which somewhat frightened her, until her brother, with a firm but gentle arm, tenderly supported her.

‘Patience, my darling,’ he whispered, ‘it will only be a few moments longer ; and we told you that this was not the scene for you.’

‘And I suppose,’ said Yarrow, with his old hard sneer on his face, and looking intently at Maggie, ‘you know all that the strong box contains ?’

‘The key of which you speak,’ said Maggie, ‘came into my possession only about a minute

ago, and I know nothing of what the box contains ; but oh ! do, *do* cherish different feelings, now that at any moment you may be summoned into the presence of your Maker, to give an account for the deeds done in the body.'

'Miss Graham, if it will give this unhappy man's mind a moment of relief even now at the last,' said Mr Lyndsay gravely, 'I can assure him that the key has been in my possession for a long time, and has never been out of it until half-an-hour ago ; he may be quite sure that the box has never been opened. If, as I half hope, that box contains the means of rescuing an honourable man's name from most undeserved suspicion, and of giving some little comfort to a mother and two brave children, who have borne suffering with the constancy of martyrs, then I ask you, for pity's sake, and for your soul's sake, no longer to conceal anything, but to make what poor restitution you can. It will be but poor after all, considering what suffering has been undergone.'

‘And pray, who may you be?’ said Yarrow slowly, and as if driven to bay at last.

‘My name is Lyndsay, sir, a member of one of the first legal firms in this city; and you might probably have been transported for life weeks ago had I acted upon my own judgment, and not upon the instructions of my friend and client, Mr. Markham.’

The face of the dying man assumed a more deathly pallor, but with a last convulsive effort he once more rose in the bed and clutched the key with triumph: ‘I have *got* it,’ he said exultingly, ‘no one shall have it but myself, no one shall have a penny or a paper of what the box contains but myself;’ then, with an awful shudder, he fell back and died, still holding the key so convulsively in his grasp, that it could not be released without considerable difficulty. Fred and Edwin led Maggie down-stairs; and, having done their best to soothe her, which at first seemed matter of impossibility, so terror-stricken had she been

by the fearful scene which she had witnessed, they left her in charge of Edwin's aged house-keeper, and again made their way up-stairs.

'Mr. Lyndsay,' said Fred, when he could find his voice, 'if it is not illegal, I must beg you, as you have been so kind as to keep this key so long in your custody, also to take the box in your keeping, and at your earliest convenience to give me the benefit of your kind assistance as to how I shall deal with it. For the money that has been lost, I candidly tell you I do not care one farthing, thanks to Mr. Hancorn's great kindness; but if we can find the stolen deeds, which my father was wickedly supposed to have made away with, and I can clear his name, I shall return to England with a light and grateful heart.'

'It seems to me,' said Dr. Murray quietly, 'that you cannot do better than remove the box into an adjoining room while this one is occupied by others who must soon be present here; and, if Lyndsay will permit me, speaking

as a practical man, unless it is illegal, the sooner you open it and probe its contents the 'better.'

'What you recommend is perfectly legal,' returned Mr. Lyndsay; 'and if my new client, Mr. Graham, will act upon my advice, we will commence the examination without a minute's delay. I beg to assure him that this is my "earliest convenience," to repeat his words.'

'Be it so,' said Fred, with a sigh; 'but if it must be so, let it be, although I have been thinking ever since he died of what has become of him.'

I shall not weary my young readers with a number of legal names for legal deeds and documents contained in the strong box. Suffice it to say, and that will better please them, that it contained a large amount of money in gold and notes, the latter of which Yarrow had never had the courage to part with in England from fear of detection. It also contained substantial proof of his deep and systematic villany, and a kind of diary which

contained notes of his progress in the schemes which he had so cleverly planned. When Mr. Lyndsay had inspected the deeds, and had heard from Fred the particulars of one friend after another giving his father the cold shoulder, he said quietly, 'There is no wonder, sir; they believed your father to have made away with them, and could not look kindly upon him in consequence; however, here they are, and have but to be produced to cover his enemies with shame, if he has any. It is a mystery how a man could have gone on so long living upon forgeries amongst such sharp fellows as we colonists profess ourselves to be. Who discovered him?'

Edwin took hold of Fairhurst's hand, which had again begun to tremble, and said gratefully, 'This is the detective, sir, Mr. Fairhurst; Fred's old writing master and mine.'

'It is a credit to you, sir,' said the lawyer shortly, but throwing upon him a look of admiration; then, the contents of the strong box being made secure, they went down-stairs.



CHAPTER XII.

WELCOME HOME.

A FORTNIGHT had elapsed since the events related in the last chapter, during which time the body of Yar-row had been consigned to its resting-place in the churchyard, while rumour was busy with the name and antecedents of the unknown man, who had for a season run so dashing a career. To the voice of rumour Edwin Markham gave little attention, and to curious questions of even intimate friends, gave less. Mr. Lyndsay, who had been working incessantly to get up a complete case with which Fred might return to England, was shorter still, and sometimes told old friends to go about

their business, and above all things to avoid the vice of curiosity.

Edwin and Markham enjoyed days of tranquil intercourse together amidst grand scenes in the New World, once as strange and as startling to the former as they were now to the latter. Maggie was frequently their companion in these excursions; and now that she had recovered her spirits from the shock she had undergone, she entered with enthusiasm and delight into the new scenes which Markham carefully mapped out and could talk, as Maggie at least thought, most eloquently about.

It wanted two days of that on which Fred and his sister were to set sail for England, when it was observed that Edwin and Mr. Lyndsay were frequently closeted together in deep consultation, after each one of which the face of the young banker would appear to be clouded by anxiety.

‘What is the matter, old boy?’ said Fred

frankly. 'No trouble of yours, I assure you, if such it be, can be anything but most serious to me. What is it?'

'It's no trouble at all, I assure you, Fred ; it's quite the contrary ; it is a most inexpressible joy to me, if I had but the courage to receive it ;' and after an expression of this kind, he would hasten back again to the bank parlour and remain invisible for hours. It was the evening before Fred and Maggie were to sail ; all had been completed, all arrangements had been made, and now they were simply awaiting the good ship's weighing anchor. They were seated at an excellent dinner at Mr. Lyndsay's table, that gentleman insisting it was his right after all the trouble he had undergone. That gentleman's face was beaming with delight, so was that of Edwin, so was that of Fairhurst.

'It almost seems as if you were glad to get rid of us,' said Fred, quite at a loss to understand this expression of feeling, especi-

ally as Edwin had been so 'deedy,' as he called it, during the last few days.

'Why, you wouldn't have us look glum, Fred, would you, old boy, when so much happiness is in store for you? As for you now, you look sorry to go.'

'Well, for many reasons I am very sorry. I am glad to get home to my proper work, to meet my dear mother again, and to do what Mr. Lyndsay has told me to do; but I am very sorry to part from you, Eddie, for,' taking his sister's hand in his own, "'When shall we three meet again!" as the old glee has it?'

'Not in thundering, lightning, or in hail, Graham,' responded Edwin, laughing; but seeing Fred's face wearing a somewhat pained expression, he went on rapidly: 'If you would listen to me for a minute or two, I could a tale unfold.'

'You will do nothing of the sort, sir,' said Mr. Lyndsay, 'we will have no unfolding of tales here; we have here to do with sober

facts, and they come within my province.' Clearing his throat, the lawyer proceeded :— 'You must know, Mr. Graham, that for several months our young banker has had most profitable offers for the transfer of the branch he has been managing, to one of the first houses in the city. It was his father's wish that this should be done, and that, as he was now old and well stricken in years, his son should return home and take the management of the London concern. He has been the most obstinate fellow that ever tried a patient lawyer's temper, and has resisted offers that would have made any other man's mouth water. All of a sudden, two or three days after your arrival, he turned completely round, and has given me no rest until I had completed the arrangements.'

'And are you coming to England, Mr. Markham?' asked Maggie, with surprise, while a flush of joy, which she could not conceal, suffused her features.

‘Yes, Miss Maggie,’ said Edwin, ‘Mr. Markham is coming to England, *and* Mr. Fairhurst; both their berths have been taken, and they will go by the same ship that we trust will carry you and Fred safe to land without another shipwreck.’

The surprise with which the news was received by brother and sister can hardly be imagined, but presently it gave way to a feeling of intense delight, and the evening glided pleasantly and rapidly away.

There are partings in every land every day, and they are never pleasant; yet Mr. Lyndsay and the few friends whom Edwin Markham had made particularly his own, contrived to make his leave-taking as cheerful and hopeful as possible. ‘You are coming back to see us again, you know,’ one after another said; and others, ‘We shall be in the old land yet, perhaps almost as soon as you are; so it is not “good-bye,” but only a fervent shake of the hand to wish you and those dear to you God speed.’

Pleasantly by the light of sun, moon, and stars; pleasantly to the music of wind and wave, and to the loving affection of united hearts; pleasantly amidst the ever new sights and surprises of the ocean, the ship sped away, and without misadventure of any kind brought our little party safe to land. Late in the evening they were in Mr. Hancorn's cheery parlour, where the brightest of fires blazed in the grate, and the cheeriest of welcomes awaited them. Mrs. Graham was present with a face that expressed a feeling too deep for words. The absence of her children had been a daily, hourly cause of anxiety to her, and she had to fondle them again and again to make sure that they had not been lost in the dreadful shipwreck, and that they were really before her safe and sound. Mr. Cartwright was one of those who welcomed the young travellers home, and could only give vent to his great joy and thankfulness in silent prayer as he meditated upon the mysterious way in which

God had made his friend's innocence and uprightness clear. Clara and Florence could not make too much of Maggie, to whom the sea voyage had almost imparted a womanly beauty and strength.

'You know you are positively beautiful, my dear,' said Clara, kissing her; and Fred and Eddie were of the same opinion. There was the little merchant contentedly nursing first one leg and then the other before the fire, saying very little, but looking volumes of kindness and goodwill. When he did speak, it was in a less shrill treble than ever, and Fred could not help remarking the contrast between the homely gentleness of this evening, and the sharp, business-like way in which he had been received at his first interview. After a long conversation about the shipwreck, and the manner in which Yarrow had been detected, Mr. Hancorn said, in something of his office tone, 'Well, you are a rich man now, Fred; what are you going to do?'



There was the little merchant contentedly nursing first one leg and then the other.—FRED GRAHAM'S RESOLVE, page 156.



‘One thing is certain, sir, if earnest words mean anything,’ said Edwin, ‘that he will never leave you if you are content to keep him; throughout the voyage he has been eloquent upon no other subject. Now that he has achieved his boyish purpose, he wants’—

‘What do you want, my boy?’ said the merchant tenderly. ‘Tell me exactly.’

‘To show my gratitude to the best of friends,’ returned Fred. ‘Can I look upon my mother, peaceful and contented, notwithstanding all her troubles,—upon Maggie, educated and accomplished, when she might have been a mere household drudge,—upon’—

‘Go on; why do you stop?’

‘Upon Clara, who has been the lode-star of my life in attempting anything good, without saying, “Thy people shall be my people, thy God my God, and where thou diest, there will I be buried?”’

The little merchant was deeply affected. ‘Fred, stay with me,’ he said presently; ‘come

into partnership with me at once; with your money and mine we may yet do some good. As your second father, it shall be my loving duty to share in your joy in clearing your good father's name. You know as much of the business as I do, and it will be a real joy to me to have your companionship.'

'Now this is as things ought to be,' said Markham, laughing and crying together. 'I only wish I had some one to take me into partnership the moment I set foot in England.'

'But you haven't come here without a purpose, I am sure,' rejoined the little merchant.

'Of course not; so far as business is concerned, I am to take my father's position in the Bank, and Mr. Fairhurst will always be to me in England what he was in Australia; but'—

'Never mind about the buts now,' interrupted Mr. Hancorn, 'supper is ready.'

Our little story might well finish here, but

that custom imperatively demands a closing word. Mrs. Graham lived happily for years in the society of Fred and Clara, his devoted and loving wife. Edwin Markham was the more prosperous as a banker, he used to say with a smile, because he had Maggie, who was a crown unto her husband. Mr. Cartwright, in a mellowed old age, and all ripe for heaven, died blessing the young man to whom as a boy he had been so fondly attached. Mr. Fairhurst was always the same steady, trustworthy man, spending more upon aged relatives than he ever thought of spending on himself. And what of Florence, about whom so little has been said? Well, the fact is, and the author must at last confess it, she was too good to be spoken about, because as husband and wife are one flesh, it might seem like egotism, and singing his own praise, if he ventured even to touch upon all that Florence has been to him for many, many years.



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